LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

The Journey, Teachings, and Legacy of a Spiritual Giant

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THE LIFE OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

THE LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

By

HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN DISCIPLES

VOL. I

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

PUBLISHED BY
SWAMI PAVITRANANDA
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LISTEN, FRIEND, I WILL SPEAK MY HEART TO THEE,
I HAVE FOUND IN MY LIFE THIS TRUTH SUPREME,—
BUFFETED BY WAVES, IN THIS WHIRL OF LIFE,
THERE'S ONE FERRY THAT TAKES ACROSS THE SEA,—

FORMULAS OF WORSHIP, CONTROL OF BREATH,
SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY, SYSTEMS VARIED,
RELINQUISHMENT, POSSESSION, AND THE LIKE,
ALL THESE ARE BUT DELUSIONS OF THE MIND;—
LOVE, LOVE,—THAT'S THE ONE THING, THE SOLE TREASURE.

*

AYE, BORN HEIR TO THE INFINITE THOU ART,
WITHIN THE HEART IS THE OCEAN OF LOVE,
" GIVE," " GIVE AWAY,"—WHOEVER ASKS RETURN,
HIS OCEAN DWINDLES DOWN TO A MERE DROP.

FROM HIGHEST BRAHMAN TO THE YONDER WORM,
AND TO THE VERY MINUTEST ATOM,
EVERYWHERE IS THE SAME GOD, THE ALL-LOVE;
FRIEND, OFFER MIND, SOUL, BODY, AT THEIR FEET.

THESE ARE HIS MANIFOLD FORMS BEFORE THEE,
REJECTING THEM, WHERE SEEKEST THOU FOR GOD?
WHO LOVES ALL BEINGS, WITHOUT DISTINCTION,
HE INDEED IS WORSHIPPING BEST HIS GOD.

—*Vivekananda*

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

IT is now ten years since Swami Vivekananda entered FINAL ILLUMINATION; it is fifty years since his personality was ushered upon earth. It is, therefore, befitting that these events should be conterminous with and celebrated by the publishing of the life he lived. For years it has been the desire of the Eastern disciples at the Advaita Ashrama to publish an authoritative biography of their teacher so as to present to the world at large and to posterity the vision, the ideas, the work and the greatness of that personality which the Swami's life embodied.

In the beginning it was planned to incorporate a biographical sketch in the last volume of the Mayavati Memorial Edition of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* but both by reason of the supreme import of the Swami's life to the world and the vast collection of biographical facts of the most interesting nature and of far-reaching significance, gathered during the last seven years, this idea was abandoned. Instead, the life is now presented in three[1] separate volumes.

Much has been written in this work in the way of interpretation, for many of the facts in the Swami's life, without explanation of the Hindu religious and social ideals and without some reference to the psychology of the mystical consciousness, would confuse the casual reader and might even seem improbable. The world knows the Swami as a giant-intellect, a great scholar and orator, a patriotic Hindu and a powerful preacher of the Vedânta. But that is knowing only one phase of this many-sided genius. Even to those who knew him personally, the Swami, both as a lad and as a man, was too complex a character to be readily understood. He was a man of original thoughts and numerous moods, each a world in itself, and when any single one of them came upon him he was so intense that for the time being he would identify himself solely with that particular state of mind above all others. Thus it happened that many persons saw him from widely varying angles and spoke of him chiefly in the sense in which they personally understood him. This accounts for the many differing presentations of the Swami. Efforts have been made in this work to present the Swami in all his moods and varied illumination so as to reveal the man *as he was*.

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[1] Actually in four volumes.

Great pains have been taken to authenticate all the private and public sources of information in connection with the biographical facts, and much discretion has been exercised in embodying these, so as to offer to the public a complete and reliable work. An excellent advantage was that most of those who knew the Swami intimately are still alive. There are many disciples, both of the Swami himself and of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, whose reminiscences by means of talks and writings, and whose private diaries and published works have given every opportunity for ascertaining the accuracy of statements. Then there are the numerous letters and writings, published and unpublished, of the Swami himself from which to verify the character and the development of his mind and his entire personality. We heartily acknowledge our indebtedness to all these valuable authorities and sources of information, too numerous to mention individually here. Everything in the way of illuminating anecdote and interpretation has been included, and all accounts have been diligently studied so as to keep within the bounds of legitimate biographical treatment.

In order to facilitate the reading and to render the treatment of the lengthy history of the life easier of approach, it has been presented in a series of short chapters under descriptive headings. The attempt throughout has been to portray the elements of life, character, growth and work in as simple and direct a manner as possible and to picture in particular, the conditions under which the Swami's life was developed and expressed. This necessitated an exposition of the ideas and activities of the modern transition in India, and a comprehensive sketch of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, who is regarded as the unique spiritual character of Modern India; it necessitated also the recital of the modern religious transition in the West, because of the Swami's multifarious work there, and also the rise and development of the monastic order of which he was the moving spirit, and of the great philanthropic organisation, known as the Ramakrishna Mission, which he founded.

The first volume presents the narrative of his personality until his twenty-fourth year and the training he underwent at the feet of his Master for the attainment of spiritual insight and realisation. It takes into account the theme around which the Swami's life is drawn,—the theme of Hinduism, its setting, its basis and its structure. It reveals the growth of a gigantic mind through modern agnosticism into complete saintship. It presents the character of the Swami's Master in the light in which the Swami himself understood him. The reader will become familiar with the Swami in the first volume as "Naren," or "Narendra," the name by which he was known both to the Master and to his brother disciples and friends, as his proper name was Narendra Nath Datta. The first volume shows how Naren, having become de-Hinduised became re-Hinduised through his perception of the synthesis of Hinduism as lived and realised by his Master. For the sake of a clear understanding of the process by which this was effected, several chapters of the first volume are devoted to the elucidation of the Hindu religious and philosophic consciousness. One sees in the first volume the man, the saint, and the prophet in the making.

The second volume deals with the narrative of the Swami's life as the wandering monk, and later on as the bearer of the message of Hinduism to the West. It takes the reader through the scenes of the Swami's life of intense austerities and Sâdhanâs in the Baranagore Math, of his travels and silent preaching throughout the length and breadth of Hindusthan, prior to his departure for America, and of his triumphant public career as the apostle of Vedântism during his sojourn in the West. It shows how at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, in 1893, the Swami became a world-wide figure and the Prophet of Hinduism. And it dwells on the momentous significance of his ideas and of his work as the spiritual teacher.

The third volume speaks of the Swami's attempts at remodelling the Indian thought-world, of his restating the entire contents of the Sanâtana Dharma and the ancient Aryan culture, and of his bringing about a religious revival in India. It reveals him as the founder of monasteries and centres of public service, as the Man of Sorrows, whose heart bled for the millions of India's poor and distressed, and also as the Man of Joys, thundering at all times in the hearing of his co-religionists the glories of Hinduism and the bright future of his race. It records his activities during his second visit to the West, and gives a vivid picture of his subsequent life in India. Finally, it speaks of the Swami's influence on Indian life, and of his message and mission as a whole; and it also speaks of the end.

The publishers are well aware that this great life has been lived too recently for the public to gauge fully the import and the possibilities it represents; they know that many of the statements and interpretations concerning the Swami recorded in this work, may not meet with universal acceptance; but they are firmly convinced that time will substantiate their value. It matters not in what light the present generation, by reading this life, may regard the Swami, be it as a teacher, patriot, prophet, or saint; it matters not whether they accept his teachings and his ideas only partially or in their entirety; but all will have to admit that in his life there was made manifest a tremendous force for the moral and spiritual welfare and uplifting of humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, nationality or time, and that as such it commends itself for careful study and reflection.

Those who have produced this work are the Swami's out-spoken followers; nay, more than that, they are his disciples and co-workers, representing as they do the Brotherhood of the Advaita Ashrama founded by the Swami himself. They have made every endeavour to give a true and comprehensive revelation of their Master. They fully realise that theirs is an enormous undertaking and responsibility. They realise, also, how difficult it is to bring the *man* into the narrow compass of a biography. This is true of every great life, but it is particularly true of Swami Vivekananda. The limitations of biographical treatment and description have been constantly before them. On the other hand, even the telling of this life is sufficiently inspiring, as of itself it affords a *Revelation*. They earnestly believe that the more the life and teachings of the Swami are made known, the more will the spiritual perspective of humanity be widened and the more will the Hindus take up the methods set forth by him for the reorganisation of their Dharma in consonance with modern needs and modern problems. They therefore make no apologies as to their understanding of him or for the method in which they have presented him. They have been actuated by the spirit of discipleship. In sending out this work into the world, they are guided by the hope that many a seeker after Truth, having a deeper knowledge of this great life, may be helped to solve the problem of existence, and having an entrée into a world of richer spiritual insight may be inspired to follow his example to travel upon that Path of Righteousness which the Swami pointed out, in the words of the Vedas, to be—*Atmano Mokshârtham Jagaddhitâyacha*—"for the Salvation of one's own soul and for the good of the world."

THE
EASTERN AND WESTERN
DISCIPLES

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS
The 4th of July, 1912

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE second edition of the Life of Swami Vivekananda comes out after a long pause due to unavoidable circumstances. In this edition the volumes have come under a thorough revision and some inaccuracies which had crept in in the first edition have been corrected in the light of later investigations. Much that was superfluous by way of extensive descriptions of Hindu religious and social ideals, with most of which the Indian reader is already conversant, has been cut short. Only that much has been preserved which is necessary for a Western reader to understand the full significance of the life. So too the chapters dealing with the elucidation of religious and philosophical consciousness have undergone much abridgment. In effecting these alterations, however, care has been taken to see that no fact of importance was omitted and that none of the numerous aspects of that marvellous character was neglected. On the other hand new information has been added, which was not available at first.

Chapters VI—XI, which throw light on the relation between Naren and Sri Ramakrishna, and on Naren, the man in the making, have been rewritten in accordance with that excellent work, in Bengali, of Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna Lilâ Prasanga,* written after the publication of the first edition of this work. We need hardly say anything about the value of these new facts, coming as they do from a rationalistic mind like that of Swami Saradananda, who above all is a direct disciple of the Master. In spite of such additions the condensation above referred to has reduced the bulk of the work to two volumes, thus bringing it within the reasonable limits of a biography for the busy general reader. The price too has been considerably lowered.

We hope the work in its new garb will be heartily welcomed by the reading public.

PUBLISHER

MAYAVATI
January 18, 1933

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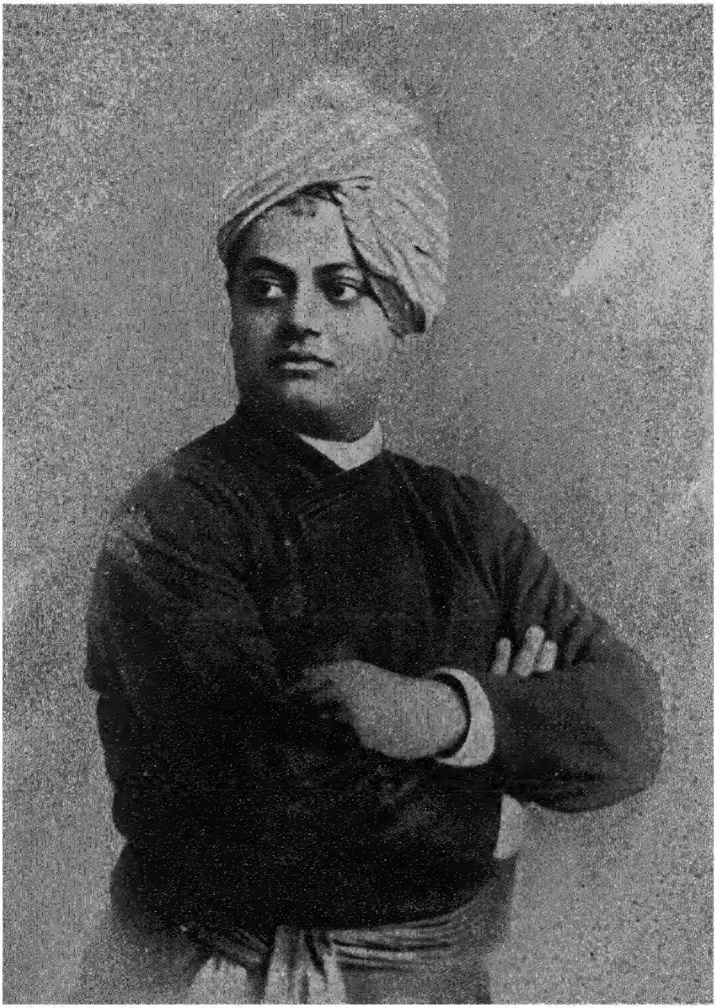
THE LIFE OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



I

ANCESTRY

Coming from Afar are the Voices of the Silence. Rarely are they heard, save by the Mystics and the Sages. And when one of these Voices becomes embodied as Sound audible to mortal hearing—blessed is the time and blessed are those who hear. Formless is the Spirit and subjective is the vision thereof; dense is the illusion that hangs as the cosmic veil before Reality! How divine, therefore, must be the personality which makes objective the vision of the Spirit! How priceless the history of one who has lifted even a fringe of the Veil! The illusion becomes transparent through the effulgence of such a spiritual personality. Verily, the Spirit Itself becomes revealed; and those who see are brought face to face with Reality!

To introduce the life of Swami Vivekananda is to introduce the subject of the spiritual life itself. All of the intellectual struggle, all of the doubts, all of the burning faith, all of the unfolding process of the spiritual illumination were revealed in him. As a man and as a Vedantist he manifested the Manliness which was Sanctity, and the Sanctity which was Manliness; he manifested the Patriotism which came from the vision of the Dharma; and he manifested the life of *intense activity* as well as of Supreme Realisation, as the fruit of the *true* Insight of Divine Wisdom. His life revealed throughout the glory of the Suprasensuous Life.

To the task of writing his life one sets oneself fervently, conscious of unworthiness, for who can know the inner self of even the least of men, much less the soul of a Vivekananda! And who can sound the depths of his personal realisation! The task is almost beyond thinking—and yet must the world know the greatness of that life which has thrilled it through its Eastern Heart and Western Mind.

The Datta family of Simla, a northern district of Calcutta, was rich and powerful, renowned for many generations for charity, learning and strong independent spirit. Râm Mohan Datta, the great-grandfather of the Subject of this chronicle, Narendra Nath, was the managing clerk and associate of an English solicitor. He amassed a great fortune in the exercise of his profession, and lived happily, surrounded by a numerous family in a large mansion in Gour Mohan Mukherjee's Lane. The house is still standing, but because of the subsequent straitened circumstances of the family that part of it which had been once used as a temple has passed into the hands of strangers. The doorway that fronts upon the street is massive. The covered hall with a room on one side and seating space on the other gives on a second doorway, beyond which is the courtyard with the living quarters. To the right are the rooms for the male members of the family. Across the courtyard and facing the doorway rises the zenana, two storeys in height, the lower floor containing the kitchens, the upper the living apartments. From the latticed enclosure the Purdah ladies in the olden days could look into the courtyard when the great religious ceremonies were being performed to the beating of drums and the blowing of conch shells.

Ram Mohan Datta left two sons, Durgâ Charan Datta and Kâli Prasâd Datta. Durga Charan was a gifted youth, well versed in Persian and Sanskrit, and so skilled in law that his father made him partner. But he had such a strong leaning towards the monastic life that, after the birth of his son he renounced the world and became a monk at the age of twenty-five and was not heard of by any member of the family until the twelve years of Sâdhanâ prescribed by the monastic rule had been accomplished.

In the meantime, his son, Viswanâth, who had been left as an infant with his mother, was growing up. The mother was fearless, devout and worthy in every way of accepting the great responsibility that Fate had thrust upon her. When Viswanath was three years old he was taken by her on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Benares. As the railroad was unknown in those days the entire party set out by boat on the five hundred mile trip. What a thrilling adventure that excursion was—a combination of hardships and romance! New cities, new scenes, new customs, new peoples,—even new languages were encountered as the boat with its precious freight glided on. One morning, as Viswanath was playing about on the deck he slipped and fell into the Ganges. Without a second's hesitation, the mother, though she could not swim, jumped overboard, fully clothed as she was, to save him. Fortunately, she was in time and held her tiny son up by the hand until help came and they were both hauled aboard. So tight was her grip on him that he bore the marks of it for many years.

At last Benares was reached. Delighted with the holy atmosphere of the place she visited all the temples, including that of Vireswar Siva. One day after she had bathed and was on her way to the temple of Viswanâth she slipped and fell with enough force to make her lose consciousness. A passing monk went to her assistance, picked her up and laid her on the temple steps. When she opened her eyes what was her amazement to find that the monk who was bending over her was her husband. Instantly, both were overwhelmed with a tremendous emotion. But worldly attachments were not for them. She as well as he had renounced. In a moment he disappeared, murmuring, 'Oh, Mâyâ, Mâyâ!' And she continued on her pious round. These two incidents are cited to show how well fitted she was to be the wife of Durga Charan!

An interesting story is told of Durga Charan's return to his birth-place, one that reveals the essential strength and quality of the man. Quite unostentatiously he slipped into Calcutta and, instead of going to his former home, put up at the house of an old friend, after begging him not to let any one know of his return. But the friend was unable to contain the joyous news and informed Durga Charan's relatives, who at once came and forcibly took him away with them. The monk, without a word, seated himself in a corner of the room provided for him, the door of which had been locked so that he might not escape. For three days he stayed there without giving any sign or tasting a bite of food. The relatives, fearing that he might die on their hands finally opened the door. Later, the monk disappeared and was never heard of again. In striving to account for the peculiar genius of Swami Vivekananda one must not lose sight of the impressive figure of his grandfather, the man who deemed the world well lost in his search for God. Vivekananda's pronounced tendency towards the monastic life was 'in the blood' as we say to explain those inexplicable outcroppings of family traits and tendencies that are so remarkable at times that in order to satisfy ourselves we must accept either the theory of reincarnation or that of heredity.

As Viswanath grew to manhood he became the pride of the Dattas. The hearts of his people were set on him in high hopes and expectations, for they looked to him to carry on the Datta tradition of learning. Nor were they disappointed. The boy was proficient in his studies, which included English and Persian, and finally adopted law as a profession and was enrolled as an Attorney-at-Law in the High Court of Calcutta. His career was a notable one, for aside from his intellectual attainments he was endowed with many qualities of character which made him respected and endeared him to all. His keen understanding of his fellowmen was the origin of his deep compassion for the afflicted and wide charity and sympathy. His ample means he spent without thought of the morrow, giving to all who asked. Here it was that he showed a lack of discrimination, for he maintained some of his relatives in idleness,—and even drunkenness. Criticised at one time by his eldest son Naren for bestowing charity upon such worthless persons, Viswanath replied in his easy-going way: "How can you understand the great misery of human life? When you realize it you will sympathize with the poor creatures who try to forget their sorrows in the momentary oblivion obtained through intoxicants!"

Viswanath was a great lover of music and had a very good voice. He it was who insisted that Naren should study music, for he looked upon it as the source of much innocent pleasure. He took great delight in the study of the Bible, and in reciting the poems of the Persian poet, Hafiz, to his family.

In his attitude towards his children he showed considerable wisdom. If any of them misbehaved he did not reprimand him, but rather, in order to produce the required reform, exposed him to the ridicule of his friends. To cite an instance: One day Naren behaved very rudely to his mother. The father, instead of scolding the boy, wrote on the door of the room where Naren received his friends: Naren Babu said these words to-day to his mother,—followed by the words actually said. Every time Naren or any of his friends entered that room they were confronted with this statement. It was not long before Naren showed signs of repentance.

Viswanath was blessed with a wife, his peer in every respect. Graceful and devoted, expert in the management of household affairs, Bhuvaneswari Devi cheerfully shouldered the responsibility of her husband's large family. She was exceptionally intelligent and found time, even in the midst of her tremendous activities, for sewing, music and the study of the Râmâyana and the Mahâbhârata. Full of the fire of one born, as it were, to regal estate, Bhuvaneswari Devi commanded the respect and veneration of all who came in contact with her and her judgment was followed in the conduct of all affairs that mattered. Calm resignation to the will of God in all circumstances, power and reserve characterized this Hindu woman. The poor and the helpless were the special objects of her solicitude. She was noted for her unusual memory and knew by heart long passages from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata which she read daily and it was the essence of these readings, and the culture as well to which they are the key, that she passed on to her children as their greatest inheritance. It was this bequest that appeared later in her son, Swami Vivekananda, transmuted into a tremendous love for humanity, above all limitations of race, creed, caste, colour or sex.

It was to these two, Viswanath and Bhuvaneswari Devi, that the boy who was to become the greatest man of his age, whose influence was to shake the world and who was to lay the foundation of a new order of things was born.

II

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

Whosoever knows the longing of a mother that a son shall be born to her, enters into the world where lived Bhuvaneswari Datta, the wife of Viswanath Datta. In common with mothers the world over she longed for a son to carry on the family tradition, to be the link, forged out of the materials of love and suffering, between the future and the past. As she went about her daily tasks she prayed silently that her desire might be fulfilled. Now, it was customary in those days—and still is—for one living a long distance from Benares who was in dire need, or desirous that some special event should come to pass, to make offerings and sacrifices to Siva through any relatives and friends who might be residents of Benares. So Bhuvaneswari Devi wrote to an old aunt of the Datta family in Benares to ask her to make the necessary offerings and prayers to Vireswar Siva that a son might be born to her. When word came that this was being done she was content to wait in perfect assurance that the prayers would be answered. She spent her days in fasting and meditations, her whole soul given over to constant recollectedness, her entire heart fixed in love on the Lord Siva. Often did her mind go to Benares, uniting in thought with the venerable aunt as she poured the sacred water of the Ganges on the symbol of the Most High or as she worshipped Him with flowers and Mantras. One night she had a vivid dream. She had spent the day in the shrine, and as evening deepened into night she fell asleep. Hushed in silence was the household, hushed in silence and rest. Then in the highest heavens the hour struck—the time was come for the saintly woman to touch the feet of the Lord. And in her dream she saw the Lord Siva arouse Himself out of His transcendent meditation and take the form of a male child who was to be her own son. She awoke. Could this ocean of light in which she found herself bathed be but a dream? Siva! Siva! Thou fulfillest in various ways the prayers of thy devotees! From the inmost soul of Bhuvaneswari Devi a joyous prayer welled up, for she was confident that her long months of expectancy were over and that the vision was but an announcement that her prayers were to be answered. Her faith was justified. And in due time her son was born.

The light of the world dawned for the first time upon the future Swami Vivekananda on Monday, January 12, 1863. It was the holy hour of dawn just six minutes before the sunrise. At the time of his birth the constellation Sagittarius was rising in the east, the moon was in the constellation Virgo, the planet Jupiter was in the eleventh house, and Saturn was in the tenth from that of his birth. It was the seventh day of the new moon in the month of Pous which is the ninth month of the Bengali year and as chance would have it, it was the day of Makar Sankrânti, a great Hindu festival. The millions of men and women who were observing the festival unconsciously greeted the new-born babe with prayers and worship, little thinking that he who was to usher in a new age of glory and splendour for his country, who was to reorganise the spiritual and national consciousness of Hindusthan and become a great Apostle—another St. Paul—preaching unto the world the Gospel of another redemption—the message of Vedânta—had, on that day, first seen the light! And only a few miles north of Calcutta in the garden of Dakshineswar there waited One for the coming of this babe who was to grow up and carry on his great work! Of which more later.

The infant grew and the time came when he had to be named. Some suggested that it should be Durgâ Dâs after the grandfather who had renounced the world. But the mother said, "Let it be Vireswar," after the aspect of Siva which she worshipped before the child's birth and Vireswar it was. They called him Bileh for short. Later, Vireswar became Narendra Nâth.

Narendra Nath was a naughty child, subject to fits of restlessness during which he was beyond control. At such time he would wear the family out. Bribes, threats—nothing was of any avail. Everything was tried, but in vain. Finally, Bhuvaneswari found that if she poured cold water on the head of the screaming child, at the same time chanting the name of Siva in his ear, or threatened him with "Siva will not let you come to Kailâs if you do not behave," he would quiet down and become his eager, joyous self again. It was after such scenes that the mother used to say: "I prayed to Siva for a son and He has sent me one of His demons." Aside from these outbursts he was a sunny-tempered, sweet, loving child, but of such an extraordinary restlessness that it took two nurses to take care of him.

The boy had a great fancy for wandering monks. Whenever a Sâdhu came to the door, Naren was delighted. One day a monk came and asked for alms. All that the boy had was a piece of new cloth wrapped round his waist. Straightway he gave it to the Sâdhu who placed it on his head and went away. When asked what had become of the cloth, the boy replied, "The monk begged me for alms and I gave it to him." Thereafter whenever a monk appeared the boy was locked up. But that did not disconcert him; he would throw out of the window to the monk anything the room contained as an offering, and then enjoy the excitement. What a tease he was! He would annoy his sisters and when chased would take refuge in the open drain, grinning and making faces at them in safety for they would not follow him there. The family cow was one of his playmates and he had a number of pet animals and birds among which were a monkey, a goat, a peacock, pigeons and two or three guinea pigs. Of the servants the coachman was his special friend and one of the ambitions of his childhood was to become a syce or groom. To him the syce with his turban and his whip which he flourished as the carriage rolled on was a magnificent person. The family tells how he would go to anyone who would take him on his lap, for he had implicit faith in all.

The first education is always at the knee of the mother. Naren used to tell later how his mother had taught him his first English words and he mastered the Bengali alphabet under her tutorship. It was at her knee that he first heard the tales of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and it was no doubt that he thus caught some of the dramatic fire and force that he exhibited later.

The first seed of spiritual life was sown at this period. His boyish imagination was captivated by the life of Râma, and he purchased a clay image of Sitâ-Râma[1] and worshipped it with flowers. One day, when no one was about, he and a little Brâhmin boy climbed the stairs that led to a room on the roof above the women's quarters. They installed the image, closed and locked the door and sat down to meditate. After some time Naren was missed and an anxious search for him was begun. The hunt led at last to the little locked room on the roof. The searchers knocked and shouted, but there was no response. In great fright, fearing that something had happened to Naren they forced the door and found the two boys seated in deep meditation before the flower-decked image. One day Naren heard someone vehemently denouncing marriage. The difficulties and absurdities of married life were painted in such dark colours, that he was terror-stricken and he thought of his little image of Sita-Rama which he had been worshipping. "If marriage is so bad what has a God got to do with it?" said the surprised boy to himself.

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[1] Sita was the wife of Rama.

So he threw away his cherished image of Sita-Rama and bought one of Siva instead on which to lavish his devotion. But what suffering this entailed! For poorer than the man despoiled of his wealth through no fault of his own is the mind of the child which has been bereft of its illusion. And yet this incident shows not only the fearlessness and sincerity of the boy who gave up his ideal, no matter how great the wrench, when he found that it did not match up with his conception of the Truth, but it also made evident the deep desire of Naren's soul for freedom from the bondage of the senses which was expressed later in those ringing words, "Ever shall the soul be free! We must have freedom from bondage however sweet."

Nevertheless the Ramayana had still a great fascination for him and whenever it was to be read in the neighbourhood he was sure to be there. Sometimes he was so rapt in the thrilling episodes of Rama's life that he forgot all about home. Once when the reading told of how Hanumân (the monkey-chief devoted to Rama) lived in banana groves he was so deeply impressed that afterwards, instead of returning home, he went to a banana grove and spent some hours of the night there for a glimpse of him.

Every night brought some strange vision to Naren. Singular was the manner in which he was ushered into sleep. As soon as he closed his eyes there appeared between his eyebrows a wonderful spot of light of changing hues, which would expand and burst and bathe his whole body with a flood of white radiance. As the mind became preoccupied with this phenomenon the body would fall asleep. It was a daily occurrence which he would court by lying down on his chest; as soon as drowsiness overtook him, the light appeared. Thinking it to be a perfectly natural thing which happened to everybody he never mentioned it, until long after when he asked a school-mate, "Do you see a light between your eyebrows at night when you go to sleep?" The friend answered in the negative. "I do," said Naren. "Try to remember. Do not fall into sleep as soon as you go to bed. Be on the alert for a while and you will see it." There was some one else, however, who put this question to Naren in later years, "Naren, my boy, do you see a light when you go to sleep?" The questioner was his spiritual teacher. But of this later on. This phenomenon remained with him until the end, although in the latter part of his life it was not so frequent or so intense, and bespoke a host of things. It told, assuredly, of a great spiritual past in which the soul had already learned so to steep itself deep in the waters of meditation that it had become instinctive with him.

Young Naren played at meditation in those days. Though it was play, it awakened in him deep spiritual emotions. The boys of the neighbourhood sometimes joined him in this pastime. Once as he was meditating with his playmates, a cobra appeared. The boys were frightened and shouting a warning to Naren ran away. But he did not hear them and remained where he was. The snake stayed about for a while and then glided away. Later in response to his parents' inquiries as to why he did not run, Naren said, "I knew nothing of the snake or anything else, I was feeling inexpressible bliss."

Five or six years seem as five or six days in the counting up of life. At the age of six Naren went to the Pâthsâlâ, the school where the boys are initiated into the three R's. But schools are strange places where one is apt to meet with strange comrades and after a few days he had acquired a vocabulary which quite upset the family's sense of propriety. Never again, determined all the household, should he go to school. Instead, a private tutor was engaged, who conducted classes in the ancient worship-hall for Naren and some of the other boys of the neighbourhood. Soon Naren was remarked for his exceptional intelligence. He learned to read and write while the other boys were wrestling with the alphabet. Naren's memory was prodigious. He had only to listen to the tutor's reading to get the lessons. At the age of seven he knew by heart almost the whole of Mugdhabodha, a Sanskrit grammar, as well as passages of great length from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. On a certain occasion, a party of wandering minstrels who earned their livelihood by chanting the Ramayana, came to Naren's house. They made a number of mistakes in the text, whereupon Naren stopped them and pointed out their errors, greatly surprising and pleasing them.

There is a lasting quality in the friendships formed in childhood which makes them endure through later years, sometimes even to death. The boys whom we see playing with Naren will be recognised later on as the friends of his manhood, over whom he still maintained the leadership acquired as a boy when none could approach him without first acknowledging his supremacy. His favourite game was 'King and the Court.' The throne was the highest step of the stairs leading from the courtyard to the Pujâh-hall. There he would install himself. No one was allowed to sit on the same level. From there he created his Prime Minister, Commander-in-Chief, Tributary Princes and other state officials and seated them on the steps according to their rank. He enacted a Durbar and administered justice with royal dignity. The slightest insubordination was put down by a disapproving glare.

Many of Naren's father's clients of different castes used to come to the house. Every caste was provided with its own tobacco pipe—provision was made for even the Mohammedans. Now caste was a great mystery to the boy. Why could not a member of one caste eat with a member of another, or smoke his pipe? What would happen if he did? Would the roof fall in on him? He decided to see for himself. Accordingly, he made the circuit of the pipes, taking a whiff from everyone—including the Mohammedan's. And nothing happened! When reprimanded for his action he said, "I cannot see what difference it makes!"

His boyish exuberance expressed itself in all sorts of ways, naughty and otherwise. One day while fighting with his playfellows he fell from the verandah of the worship-hall and struck his head against a stone. To his death he carried the scar of this on his forehead just above the right eye.

The Sage who was his teacher in later life said of this, "Had Naren's powers not been checked by this accident he would have shattered the world!" As it was, he raised the world!

Those who are to change the thought of the world as did Plato and Aristotle, to alter its destinies as did Alexander and Caesar—are from their childhood conscious of their power—they are instinctively aware of the greatness which is to come. Narendra Nath, too, felt the spirit of greatness within him; he saw things to which others of his age were blind, and he felt already, in the feeble and yet certain way of a child, the struggle which was to be his for expression.

III

EARLY EDUCATION. GLIMPSES OF SPIRITUALITY

In 1870, when Naren was seven years old he entered the tenth class of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyâsâgar's Metropolitan Institution. His exceptional intelligence was at once recognised by teachers and class-mates. But he was so restless that they say of him that he never really sat down at his desk at all.

When he played, he played furiously. The games were marbles, jumping, running, and boxing. When the class was dispersed for tiffin, he would be the first to finish and run back to the playground. New games always fascinated him and he invented many to amuse himself and his friends. He made toy gas works and aerated waters, which were then newly introduced in Calcutta, and interested himself in toy railways and all sorts of machinery. Disputes often arose among boys, and it was to Naren that the disputants came as to a court of arbitration. Sometimes to amuse himself he would set one party against the other. If this led to blows he would rush in between the contending parties, sometimes at great risk of being injured, but his knowledge of boxing helped him to protect himself. Often the boy would turn the class-room into his playground. Even during the lessons, he would entertain his friends with stories of the wild pranks he had played at home or with tales from the Ramayana or the Mahabharata.

Once, during a lesson the teacher suddenly asked

Naren and his friends who were talking amongst themselves, to repeat what he had been saying. All were silent; but Naren, having the power to double his mind was able to listen to the lesson, the while he amused the boys. He answered correctly all the questions put to him. The teacher then asked who had been talking during the lesson, and would not believe the boys when they pointed to Naren. So he made them stand up as punishment. Naren stood up, too. "You do not have to stand," said the teacher. The boy replied, "But I must for it was I who was doing the talking," and remained standing.

Soon after he was told that he would have to study English. He was not willing to do so. It was a foreign language, he said, so why should he learn it? The teachers persisted and the boy went home crying to his parents, who agreed with the teachers. When he did commence to study English several months later, everyone was astonished at his enthusiasm and the ease with which he acquired it.

Naren retained his admiration for the wandering monk. "I must become a Sannyasin," he would tell his friends, "a palmist predicted it," and he would show a certain straight line on the palm of his hand which indicated the tendency to the monastic life.

An incident occurred at this time which serves to show the boy's innate fortitude and the difficulty of intimidating him. One of the teachers of the Institute was a man of very ugly temper, given to corporal punishment of the boys when he thought discipline was needed. One day, as he was severely castigating a delinquent, Naren began to laugh from sheer nervousness, so much revolted was he by the exhibition of brutality. The teacher turned his wrath on Naren, raining blows on him, and demanded that he should promise never to laugh at him again. When Naren refused the teacher not only resumed the beating, but pulled him by the ears as well even going to the length of lifting the boy by them up on a bench, tearing one of the ears so that it bled profusely. And still Naren refused to promise, and bursting into tears of rage said, "Do not pull my ears! Who are you to beat me? Take care not to touch me again." Luckily, at this moment, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar came in. Naren, weeping bitterly, told him what had happened, and, taking his books, declared that he was going to leave the school for ever. Vidyasagar took him to his office and consoled him. Later, an investigation was made of the disciplinary measures obtaining in the school and steps were taken to prevent any repetition of the regrettable incident. When Bhuvaneswari Devi heard of the matter she was very much incensed and begged the boy not to return to the school, but he went the following day as though nothing had happened. The ear did not heal for a long time.

Even at this early age he evinced an impatience with superstition and fear, no matter how hallowed by tradition. The following incident is illustrative of this quality. He was in the habit of climbing a tree in the compound of one of his friends, not only to gather flowers, but to get rid of his superfluous energy by swinging to and fro, head downward, and then somersaulting to the ground. These antics annoyed the old, half-blind grandfather of the house, and he thought to stop them by telling Naren that the tree was haunted by a Brahmadaitya—the ghost of an uninitiated Brahmin—dressed in white that broke the necks of those who climbed the tree.

Naren listened politely, but when the old man was out of sight he again began to climb the tree. His friend who had taken the words of the old man seriously remonstrated. But Naren laughed at his seriousness and said, "What an ass you are! Why, my neck would have been off long before this if the old grandfather's ghost story were true!"

Only a boyish prank it is, true, but significant when viewed in the light of later developments—in some sense a forecast of the insight and utterance of the time when Swami Vivekananda was to say to large audiences, "Do not believe a thing because you read it in a book! Do not believe a thing because another has said it is so! Find out the truth for yourself! That is realisation!"

Naren hated monotony. He organised an amateur theatrical company and presented plays in the worship-hall of his home. After a few performances, his uncle became annoyed and destroyed the stage. Then he started a gymnasium in the courtyard of the house where his friends used to take their regular physical exercises. It went on for some time till one of his cousins broke his arm. Again the uncle showed his lack of sympathy, this time by destroying the accessories of the gymnasium. Thereupon Naren joined the gymnasium of a neighbour, Navagopal Mittra, with his friends and began to take lessons in fencing, Lâthi-play, wrestling, rowing, and other sports. Once he carried the first prize in a general athletic competition. When tired of these, he showed magic lantern pictures in his home.

He was the favourite of all. With every family in the locality, of high or low caste, rich or poor, he established some sort of relationship. Did any of the boys whom he knew suffer any bereavement he was the first to offer consolation. His ready wit and pranks kept everybody amused, sometimes, indeed, making even the grave-minded elders burst into roars of laughter. He was a favourite with the ladies of the zenana whom he addressed as 'auntie', 'sister', etc., according to their age. He never suffered from shyness, and made himself at home everywhere.

At this time he conceived the idea of learning to cook, and he induced his playmates to subscribe according to their means, towards the project, he himself, however, bearing the greater part of the expense. He was the chief cook and the others were his assistants. His cooking was excellent, although he was inclined to use too much cayenne pepper.

When he could snatch time from his studies, he would take his friends to various interesting places in Calcutta. Sometimes it was a garden, another time the Ochterloney Monument or again the Museum. One day, he set out, with a party, by way of the Ganges for the Nawab's Zoological gardens at Metiaburuz, a suburb of Calcutta. When they were returning one of the boys became desperately sick. The boatmen were annoyed and insisted that the lads should immediately clean up the boat. They refused to do so, offering instead to pay double. The offer was refused. On reaching the ghat the men would not allow the boys to land and threatened them. While the boatmen were abusing the boys Naren jumped ashore, and asked two British soldiers walking near by for help in rescuing his friends. In broken English he told his tale of woe, as he slipped his small hands into theirs and guided them towards the scene of the trouble. The soldiers listened with quiet affection and when they understood the situation in a threatening voice they commanded the boatmen to release the boys. The boatmen were terrified at the sight of the soldiers and set the boys free without another word and disappeared. The soldiers were fascinated with Naren and invited him to go with them to the theatre. But he declined and took his leave after thanking them for their kindness.

Another delightful story is told of him when he was about eleven years old. A British man-of-war, the Syrapis, visited the Port of Calcutta when the late Emperor Edward VII came to India as the Prince of Wales. Naren's friends urged him to try and secure a pass for them all to see the ship. For this it was necessary to see an important English official. When Naren made his appearance with application in hand the attendant at the door thinking him too young refused to allow him to enter. As Naren stood aside wondering what to do, he noticed that applicants who passed the porter went to a room on the first floor. Realising that that must be the room into which he must penetrate if he were to get his permit, he set about to find another entrance. In the rear was a staircase. Stealthily he made his way up to the top, pushed aside a curtain and found himself in the room. He took his place in line and when his turn came the application was signed without question. As he passed the door-keeper on his way out, the latter said in amazement, "How did you get in?" "Oh, I am a magician," Naren answered.

As we have seen before, Naren was a regular attendant of the neighbouring gymnasium of Navagopal Mittra, who practically left its management in Naren and his friends' hands. One day they were trying to set up a very heavy trapeze. A crowd, amongst which was an English sailor, gathered to watch. Naren asked the sailor to help. As the trapeze was being lifted it fell and knocked the sailor unconscious. Nearly everyone but Naren and one or two of his friends, disappeared from the scene, as they thought the sailor had been killed. With great presence of mind Naren tore his own cloth, bandaged the wound, sprinkled the sailor's face with water and fanned him gently. When the sailor recovered consciousness, Naren lifted him up and removed him to a neighbouring schoolhouse. A doctor was sent for. After a week's nursing the sailor recovered and Naren presented him with a little purse which he had collected from his friends.

Though the boy was full of wild pranks, he had no evil associates. His instinct kept him away from the dubious ways of the world. Truthfulness was the very backbone of his life. Occupied during the day in devising new games, he was beginning to meditate during the night and soon was blessed with some wonderful visions.

As Naren grew older a definite change in his temperament was noticeable. He began to show a preference for intellectual pursuits, to study books and newspapers, and to attend public lectures regularly. He was able to repeat the substance of those to his friends with such original criticism that they were astonished, and developed an argumentative power which none could withstand.

One day he heard a friend singing like a professional and said, "Mere tune and time-keeping are not all of music. It must express an idea. Can any one appreciate a song sung in a drawling manner? The idea underlying the song must arouse the feeling of the singer, the words should be articulated distinctly and proper attention be given to tune and timing. The song that does not awaken a corresponding idea in the mind of the singer is not music at all."

In the year 1877, while Naren was a student of the third class his father went to Raipur in the Central

Provinces. He arranged that his family should follow him later on under the charge of Naren. It was a long journey partly by bullock-cart *viâ* Allahabad and Jubbulpore through dense forests and over unfrequented roads, for the railways were in those days constructed only up to Nagpur. An incident happened on the way which shows that his spiritual insight was deepening. He had had visions and many moods of spiritual consciousness; this experience was induced by contemplating the beauties of nature.

The party had been journeying in bullock-carts for several days. The weather was perfect and Naren was feeling the joyous freedom of life in the open. The natural beauty on the way mitigated the fatigue of the journey. Naren was charmed with the exquisite grace and beauty with which the Almighty Creator had adorned the rugged bosom of the earth. On that particular day the party was passing over the Vindhya range where the lofty hills on either side of the road almost met. The verdant trees and creepers laden with flowers and joyous with the warbling of birds of variegated colours filled Naren's heart with ineffable bliss. Suddenly his eyes alighted on a very large hive in a cleft in one of the hills. It must have been there a very long time. His mind in thinking of that colony of bees was soon lost in wonder at the majesty and power of the Divine Providence. Lost to all outward consciousness he lay in the bullock-cart—how long he could not remember,—and when he returned,—blessed, as it were, and blissful,—to the normal state of things, he found that, in the meantime, considerable distance had been traversed. Perhaps this was the first time that his powerful imagination helped him to ascend into the realm of the Unknown and oblivion of the outer world.

Another interesting fact of his mind may be described here in his own words, "From my very boyhood," Swami Vivekananda said later on, "whenever I came in contact with a particular object, man or place, it would sometimes appear to me as if I had been acquainted with it beforehand. But all my efforts to recollect were unsuccessful and yet the impression persisted. I will give you an instance. One day I was discussing various topics with my friends at a particular place. Suddenly something was said, which at once reminded me that in some time past in this very house I had talked with these friends on that very subject and that the discussion had even taken the same turn. Later on I thought that it might be due to the law of transmigration. But soon I decided that such definite conclusions on the subject were not reasonable. Now I believe that before I was born I must have had visions somehow, of those subjects and people with whom I would have to come in contact in my present birth. That memory comes, every now and then, before me throughout my whole life."

There was no school then in Raipur. This gave Naren the time and opportunity to become very intimate with his father—a great privilege, for his father had a noble mind. Viswanath Datta attracted the intellect of his son. He would hold long conversations with him upon topics that demanded depth, precision and soundness of thought. He gave the boy free intellectual rein, believing that education is a stimulus to thought and not a superimposition of ideas. To his father Naren owed his capacity of grasping the essentials of things, of seeing truth from the widest and the most synthetic standpoint, and of discovering and holding to the real issue under discussion.

Naren was physically perfect and had, to some extent, already acquired that regal bearing which made him, in after years, a notable figure wherever he went. He was beginning to discriminate in the choice of his friends, not accepting any who was not his intellectual peer.

Many noted scholars visited his father. Naren would listen to their discussions, and occasionally joined in them. In those days he sought, nay demanded, intellectual recognition from everyone. So ambitious was he in this respect that if his mental powers were not given recognition, he would fly into a rage, not sparing even his father's friends and nothing short of an apology would quiet him. Of course the father could not sanction such outbursts and reprimanded the boy, but, at the same time, in his heart he was proud of the intellectual acumen and keen sense of self-respect of his son.

Viswanath Datta returned to Calcutta with his family in 1879. There was some difficulty about getting Naren into school, for he had been absent for two years, but his teachers loved him and remembering his ability made an exception in his case. Then he gave himself up to study, mastering three years' lessons in one, and passed the Entrance Examination in the first division. He was the only student in the school to attain that distinction. His father gave him a watch as a reward.

When he had passed the Entrance Examination, Naren had made much advance in knowledge. While he was in the Entrance class he had mastered a great many standard works of the English and the Bengali literature and had read many books of history. He had specially studied standard works on Indian history by such authors as Marshman and Elphinstone. As he paid little attention to the text books, sometimes he used to work hard just on the eve of the examinations. Once he said, "Just two or three days before the Entrance Examination I found that I hardly knew anything of Geometry. Then I began to study the subject keeping awake for the whole night and in course of twenty-four hours I mastered the four books of Geometry."

At this time he acquired the power of reading which he described as follows: "It so happened that I could understand an author without reading his book line by line. I could get the meaning by just reading the first and the last line of a paragraph. As this power developed I found it unnecessary to read even the paragraphs. I could follow by reading only the first and last lines of a page. Further, where the author introduced discussion to explain a matter and it took him four or five or even more pages to clear the subject, I could grasp the whole trend of his arguments by only reading the first few lines."

IV

COLLEGIATE DAYS—TENDENCIES

The playtime of childhood with its joys and sorrows was over for Naren, and a new life with a more serious outlook dawned for him, when, in 1879 at the age of sixteen, he passed the Entrance Examination and entered College. He had grown to manhood's stature, was muscular, agile and inclined to stoutness. Hereafter one sees him as a student, intensely intellectual.

Naren studied at the Presidency College for a year but after that time he entered the General Assembly's Institution founded by the Scottish General Missionary Board. It is now known as the Scottish Church College. Hard study on the eve of the Entrance Examination together with ascetic practices had shattered his health and consequently he had a nervous breakdown. He went to Gaya for a change and returned to Calcutta a few months before the First Arts Examination which he passed in 1881 in the second division. It was while he was in the First Arts class that he met for the first time in November, 1881, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. It will be interesting to note here how he first came to hear of the great saint. Professor William Hastie, the great scholar, was at that time the Principal of the Institution. One day during the absence of the professor of English he took over the literature class. He was explaining Wordsworth's "Excursion", in which the poet refers to the state of trance of which the poet had had a glimpse while contemplating the beauties of nature. The students did not understand. The professor said, "Such an experience is the result of purity of mind and concentration on some particular object, and it is rare indeed, particularly in these days. I have seen only one person who has experienced that blessed state of mind and he is Ramakrishna Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar. You can understand if you go there and see for yourself." It was thus that Naren heard of his future Master, and not through the Brâhmo Samâj of which he was a member.

Naren did not limit his studies to the curriculum. During the first two years of his college life he acquired a thorough grasp of all the masterpieces of Western logic, and in his third and fourth year class he set himself to mastering Western philosophy as well as the ancient and modern history of the different nations of Europe.

Even in College, Naren depended on his prodigious memory. A month before the B.A. Examination he had not read a single page of Green's History of the English People which was one of the text books prescribed. He did not even own a copy. He procured one and vowed that he would not leave his room until he had mastered its contents. In three days he knew the book thoroughly. Often before the examination he would read for the whole night and use strong tea or coffee to keep him awake. Came the morning before the B. A. Examination and we find Naren in a strange mood. Far from dreading the coming ordeal his mind was filled with the idea of the uselessness of all learning if it did not bring with it the desire for Reality which is born of the love of God. So we find him standing outside of his college-mate's room singing absorbedly, almost ecstatically, his face radiant. He began with the opening verse of the song, "We are like children", etc. Again it was a song of praise:

"Sing ye, O mountains, O clouds, O great winds!
Sing ye, sing ye, sing His Glory!
Sing with joy all ye, the suns and moons and stars!
Sing ye, Sing ye, His Glory!"

He sang and talked until nine o'clock.

A friend intervened and reminded him of the examination. But Narendra paid no attention. Already his great renunciation was being foreshadowed. However, he appeared for the examinations the next day and passed.

For four or five years Naren had studied vocal and instrumental music under the able tutelage of Ahammad Khan and Beni Gupta, two well-known musicians and could play many musical instruments, though he excelled in song. From the Mohammedan teacher he learnt many Hindi, Urdu and Persian songs, most of them devotional. He wrote later on an elaborate preface to a book of Bengali songs compiled by one of his friends in which he discussed the science and technique of Indian music.

In college, he attracted the attention of both Indian and English professors who recognised his ambitious mind and the latent powers of his personality. Principal W. W. Hastie said, "Narendra Nath is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities, even in German Universities, amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make his mark in life!" Naren tested everything by argument. Even during recreation he continued the discussions begun in the hours of study. He was vehement, vigorous, of untiring energy, and his topics of conversation were endless. During his collegiate life he underwent a wonderful psychological transformation. A born idealist and seeker of truth he was not to be satisfied with mere worldly enjoyments. He longed to pierce the veil of nature, but his reason had to be satisfied at the same time. Beneath the surface of his conscious mind ran the swift currents of desire for Reality, which made him aware from his earliest years that his life was to be different from the rest of mankind.

Let it not be imagined, however, that he was not a lad in other things. He was as keen for adventure as ever and the first to see the humorous side of a situation. Small incidents like the following show how strong was his affection for his friends. On the eve of the B. A. Examination one of his friends found himself in such financial difficulties that he could not pay the college or examination fees. Naren interceded on his behalf to the Superintendent of the college, who had the power to remit the entire amount, but to no avail. One day he resolved to make a last appeal and waited in the street at the hour at which he knew the Superintendent was sure to pass. He made such an impassioned plea that the Superintendent relented and the friend was able to take the examinations without any further trouble.

The remarks of one of Naren's friends will give an insight into their attitude towards him. Said he, "It was delightful to listen to him. His voice was like music to us. We would often open a subject for discussion just for the pleasure of hearing him speak. He was so interesting and, above all, so original. Even at that time he detested any sort of weakness. He was a great admirer of Napoleon, and tried to impress upon us that the followers of any great cause must give the unquestioning obedience which Marshal Ney showed to his Emperor."

It was at this period that he began to interest himself in the issues of the day, specially Brâhmo Samâj. The healthy activities of the Brâhmo Samâj were in sharp contrast to the moribund state of Hindu society, and its leader, Keshab Chandra Sen, the hero of a hundred platforms, was the idol of young Bengal. We shall state here very briefly the underlying principles of the Brâhmo movement. The travail of passing through a new birth of a nation brings in its train movements of reform, the struggle of a new vision seeking expression and the old established tradition desiring conservation. From the clash between these two come the reformers and the reactionaries. The Brâhmo Samâj is the outward expression of an endeavour to liberalise and at the same time to conserve the evolved instincts of the Hindu race. Its coming into existence was co-terminous with the awakening of the intellect of the illustrious reformer Râjâ Râmmohan Roy, a man of gigantic intellect, inflexible will and the courage and prestige necessary for any attack on the evils which threatened the very existence of the nation. He was wide enough to see that if Hinduism were to survive it would be at the cost of many religious and social reforms. Later, Maharshi Debendra Nâth Tâgore and Keshab Chandra Sen became his most powerful followers, and it is really owing to those three that the life of the movement was assured. This movement protested against certain forms and tenets of the orthodox Hindu, such as polytheism, image worship, Divine Incarnation, and the need of a Guru. It therefore offered a monotheistic religion which repudiated all these. On the social side, reforms in the way of breaking up of the caste system and the caste consciousness, the recognition of the equality of man, the education and emancipation of women, with the raising of the marriageable age were demanded. It was a tremendous task which they assigned to themselves, one requiring endless patience and wisdom. But the Brâhmo Samâj lacked the means of carrying out these reforms, and the recognition of the fact that all reforms must come from within; that superimposition can have no lasting influence.

It is not to be wondered at that this movement captured the imagination of young Bengal. In Naren was aroused a tumult of thought and feeling, and he came to regard the Samâj, whose meetings he often attended, as an ideal institution in which might be solved all of life's problems, individual or national. He was imbued with the same ideas as the Brâhmo leaders. He knew the burden and had chafed under the rigidity of caste. He had no sympathy with polytheism and image worship. He espoused the cause with all earnestness, and it was his earnest wish that the strength of thought, depth of feeling, the enthusiasm and the personal magnetism which were the characteristics of Keshab Chandra Sen, and through which he influenced his numerous followers, might one day be his.

In 1878 there was a split in the Brâhmo Samâj, and a number of the members headed by Pandit Siva Nâth Sâstri and Vijay Krishna Goswâmi formed a new society called the Sâdhâran Brâhmo Samâj. Naren identified himself with the new organization and his name is still on the rolls of the original members. He also joined at this time a movement for the education of the masses, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. His intense desire for freedom made him willing to identify himself with anything that promised liberation from obsolete methods, or to cast aside anything that might interfere with his gaining of a larger vision. He was not content with passivity; he wanted to know the 'why' and the 'how' of every phenomenon, mental or spiritual.

The most important trait in his character was purity. Like every other lad he was subjected to influences of a dubious nature. The opportunities for questionable adventures were many, but the influence of his mother made itself felt here, for she had made purity a matter of loyalty to herself and to the family. Then too, 'something' always held him back, as he himself said later on. And purity became the standard by which he judged all ideals and visions of the soul and God; it was the background to all his thought and feeling, and he felt that, without it, the spiritual life was impossible. To him, it was not a passive resistance to evil, but an active, overwhelming passion, a burning spiritual force relating itself to all forms of life and far beyond the merely sexual definition. Brahmacharya[1] was his ideal for students,—a Brahmacharya of hard intellectual labour combined with and governed by great personal purity—a necessary stage of preparation of mind and heart for the vision which the scriptures promise to those who are faithful to that ideal.

About this time Naren's father began to urge him to marry, with the tempting prospect of such a large dowry that he would be able to go to England to take the Civil Service Examination. But Naren rebelled. And strange to say, every time the subject of marriage came up, some unforeseen difficulty would arise or events would take some turn making it necessary to abandon the matter for the time being.

The inward spiritual urge was becoming very strong now. With the rest of the Brâhmo Samâj he believed in a formless God with attributes, (as distinguished from the Absolute of the Advaita Vedânta[2]) but, unlike the others, he was convinced that if God really existed He would surely appear in answer to the sincere prayers of the devotee. He felt that there must be a way of realising Him, else life would be futile.

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[1] Chastity in thought, word and deed.
[2] Spiritual Monism.

Since entering youth's estate as he would go to sleep two strikingly dissimilar visions of life would come up before his mind's eye,—one of the life of comfort, ease, luxury, the life of the senses, the enjoyment of wealth, power, name and fame, and the love of a devoted wife and family, in short, the worldly life,—the other picture was of the Sannyâsin, a wandering monk having no possessions, fixed in the consciousness of Divine Reality, living as fortune caused him to drift, eating only such food as chance might bring and resting at night under the canopy of the sky in the forest or on the mountain side. He believed himself capable of realising either of these ideals, and he often pictured himself in both, for he felt these two were within him, two painters, one, the spirit of desire, the other, the spirit of renunciation. But the further inward he would go the stronger became the figure of renunciation; the worldly one would begin to fade until finally it disappeared. Thus the spiritual self of Naren held mastery, choosing the renunciation of desire, which is the only way to gain the vision of God.

For a time the intellectual atmosphere of the Brâhmo Samâj satisfied him; he felt uplifted during the prayers and devotional songs. But presently it began to dawn on him that, if God was to be realised, he was no nearer the goal than before he joined it. What were philosophies and Vedas, but attempts to describe the Indescribable? They were useless if they did not bring one to the feet of the Lord!

In his longing to know the Truth he turned to Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, who was regarded by many as one of the best of spiritual teachers.

Naren had been, in company with some friends, to see him once before, and he had advised them to practise meditation with great intensity. So to the Maharshi who lived in retirement on the banks of the Ganges, Naren, burning with the desire to know God, went a second time. The sudden appearance of Naren startled the venerable old man. Before he could say a word, Naren, tense with excitement, burst out the question: "Sir, have you seen God?" The Maharshi was unable to answer and contented himself with saying, "My boy, you have the Yogi's eyes." Naren came away disappointed. No, the Maharshi had not seen God. He went to the leaders of other religious sects, and not one of them could say that he had seen God. Where then should he go? Suddenly he remembered Sri Ramakrishna, whom he had met for the first time at the house of a devotee of his named Surendra Nath Mittra in November, 1881, whither Naren had gone to sing. The Master had been greatly attracted by the singing, had made inquiries about Naren and had even invited him to Dakshineswar. So Naren decided to go to Dakshineswar and put his question.

We shall see later what happened there and Sri Ramakrishna's answer to the question. This meeting marked the opening of a new chapter in the spiritual life of Narendra Nath.

V

SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Adjustment is the law of nature, whether in the domain of spirit or matter. Through an inscrutable law, East and West offer two fields of activity, one in the domain of spirit and the other in the domain of matter, for the glorious consummation of the ideal to which all humanity has been moving through its science, philosophy, metaphysics and religion. The West has devoted itself to researches in and discovery of the nature of material things; the East from time immemorial has experimented in religion in order to learn the laws that rule the realm of spirit. Both ideals are necessary for the progress of humanity; its future rests on their co-operation and mutual understanding.

In the last century one more adjustment on the spiritual plane was required. Material ideas were at their height of glory and power. Rampant growth uninspired by higher idealism of materiality governed the world. While the West was running after worldly enjoyments the East had fallen from its true ideals. Devoid of the spirit of renunciation, the eternal Religion of the Vedas was broken into conflicting sects. The world was awaiting the birth of a Prophet in whose mind, purified of all worldly taint, the great truths underlying all the religious systems of the world would be revealed once more,—a Prophet whose life would harmonise all apparently contradictory religious ideals and the various national and social ideals of different races and nationalities, thus uniting humanity by the ties of love and toleration into a single brotherhood.

At this psychological moment of the world's history, the Lord, true to His promise that whenever virtue subsides and vice prevails He bodies Himself forth, incarnated Himself as Sri Ramakrishna, combining in a single personality the wonderful love and compassion of Buddha and Christ with the keen intellect of Sankara to demonstrate what true religion was.

At Kâmârpukur, a distant village of Bengal, a child was born of poor Brâhmin parents on the 18th of February, 1836. The father and mother were venerated as living saints by the simple villagers. The child was named Gadâdhar. He grew up amidst the simplicities of a village, the cows, the fields and the simple village life, yet he manifested even in his early boyhood remarkable traits. It is said that a religious song in praise of the gods or discussing of religious topics would often send him into a trance. When the father passed away the family fell into straitened circumstances. The eldest brother Râmkumâr came to Calcutta and opened a school. Gadadhar soon joined his brother there. Here for the first time Sri Râmakrishna—for that is the name by which Gadadhar has become famous all over the world as a great Prophet—came in touch with modern ideas. His brother was desirous of arousing his interest in secular education, but Sri Ramakrishna who was already beginning to realise that he was born for a definite purpose, asked himself, "Shall I attain piety, devotion and divine fervour by pursuing this education?" "No," was the emphatic reply of his mind. "Will it enable me to be as God-fearing and upright as my father?" "No," echoed his innate religious instinct. "Shall I be able to realise God through this education and escape from universal ignorance and the glamour of material enjoyments?" The same reply came from his heart. "Then what shall I do with this education which will not help me to realise God or to transcend the miseries of the world? I would rather remain ignorant all my life and follow the path of God than throw away my cherished ideals," was his conclusion. To his brother's persuasion he said emphatically, "Brother, what shall I do with a mere bread-winning education? I would rather acquire that wisdom which will illumine my heart and getting which one is satisfied for ever."

About this time the Kâli temple at Dakshineswar, about four miles to the north of Calcutta on the east bank of the Ganges, was founded by Râni Râsmani, a pious Hindu lady of great wealth and influence. Mathurâ Nâth Biswas, her son-in-law, was the manager of her estate. Ramkumar was invited to take the place of the priest at the temple, which he accepted. He came to live at Dakshineswar with his brother Ramakrishna. The proximity of the holy Ganges, the quietness and solitude of the temple-compound in contrast with the turmoil of the busy metropolis, and above all, the living presence of Kâli, the Divine Mother of the universe, filled the mind of Sri Ramakrishna with a strong desire for the realisation of God, and there came a great change in him. The boy became the devotee; the devotee became the ascetic; the ascetic became the saint; the saint became the man of realisation; the man of realisation became the prophet; the prophet became merged in the Divine Nature which is God. And all this happened in the course of twelve years. It is impossible to give an idea of his passionate yearning for realisation, his utter renunciation of worldly enjoyments, his sincerity, single-minded devotion and the ecstasies of his soul which characterised this period of his life. He was innocent of scriptures and the intricacies of religious practices. He received very little help from guides at this stage. All he possessed was the great eagerness of the child to see his mother as well as a supreme disgust for worldly enjoyments. The day was spent in worship, prayer and song; in the twilight of the early morning and dusk he would stroll along the bank of the Ganges absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine Mother; the nights were spent in meditation. Thus while those about him were wasting time in all sorts of frivolity, he was burning day and night with this consuming thirst for God. The vision of the Divine Mother became the one passion of Sri Ramakrishna; but he had not, as yet, realised Her. Days and months passed in this wise, with no abatement of his zeal.

The agony of longing for his Divine Mother was gradually increasing. In the evening on the bank of the Ganges he would cry aloud, "Another day is gone in vain, Mother, for I have not seen Thee. Another day of this short life has passed and I have not realised the Truth." Then doubts would cross his mind and he would say, "Art Thou true, Mother, or is it all fiction, mere poetry without any reality? If Thou dost exist, why can I not see Thee? Is religion, then, a phantasy, a mere castle in the air?" But this scepticism was only momentary; like a flash of lightning he would recall the lives and the struggles of those who had been blessed with the vision of God, and he would redouble his efforts.

One day the agony became quite unbearable. It was an excruciating pain. He thought that life was useless without the vision of God and determining to put an end to it, he seized the sword that was hanging in the Mother's temple. All on a sudden, the

Divine Mother illuminating everything with Her effulgent splendour revealed Herself to him. He fell unconscious to the floor. What happened after that he did not know, nor how that day or the next passed—for within him was a constant flow of ineffable bliss altogether new, and he felt the direct presence of the Divine Mother. After this vision Sri Ramakrishna became God-intoxicated. The period subsequent to this was replete with thrilling incidents of a spiritual nature. He was just stepping into a new realm, vast and limitless; he had extraordinary visions, in trance as well as in normal consciousness, and in reality belonged to another region where he held communion with strange invisible beings. To people about him all this looked like madness, pure and simple. Though the young priest had been blessed with the vision of the Divine Mother, yet he was not happy for it was not continuous. Could it be that his thirst after God, intense as it was, was half-hearted? He put fresh energy into his struggles and increased his prayers to the Divine Mother. As his realisations deepened his vision of the Mother began to be continuous, the image in the temple disappeared and in its stead there stood the living Mother Herself, smiling and blessing him. He actually even felt Her breath on his hand, and heard Her anklets tinkling as She went to the upper story of the temple. So did the separation between him and his Divine Mother gradually vanish and he became Her child.

His whole mind and nervous system thus became attuned to the Highest Reality and unable to respond to any worldly stimulus. Sex consciousness was completely erased from this mind. Mathura Nath even contrived to tempt him secretly but he passed through such trials quite unscathed, embodiment of purity and self-control that he was. He himself said that in his whole life not even in dream did he look upon a woman other than as the visible representation of the Divine Mother.

The physical shock of the first vision of the Mother was so great that for a time his body became subject to various ailments. He went back to Kamarpukur at the request of his mother and there his relatives, anxious on account of his health and in order to divert his mind to worldly affairs, married him to a young girl from a neighbouring village. He readily agreed to the proposal, seeing it as the will of the Divine Mother. A short stay at Kamarpukur did him much good but soon he returned to Dakshineswar and was plunged once more into stormy struggles, forgetting his mother, wife and relations. Days, weeks and months passed in this search for Truth. At this time there came to Dakshineswar a nun who was an adept in the Path of Devotion as well as in the intricacies of the Tântrika Sâdhanâ.[1] She was the first to diagnose the cause of Sri Ramakrishna's maladies and his so-called madness. She saw that Sri Ramakrishna was in the state which is known in the Vaishnava scriptures as Mahâbhâva and that his experiences were the result of his extreme love for God. Happy the man who had such experiences! She was convinced that in his trances he had scaled the ultimate heights of spiritual realisation. From this and various other factors she came to the conclusion that Sri Ramakrishna was an Incarnation and this she established before an assembly of Pandits, giving the scriptures as her authority. Sri Ramakrishna accepted her as his Guru and practised under her guidance the devotional and Tântrika methods of Sâdhanâ, in which he attained perfection in an incredibly short time.

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[1] Practice.

Later there came to Dakshineswar a Vaishnava saint, an itinerant monk and a devotee of Rama. Râmlâlâ or the child Rama was his favourite deity and he had already had a vision of Him. He carried a metal image of Ramlala with him which he showed to Sri Ramakrishna. But Sri Ramakrishna saw the living Rama in it, and soon established a loving relationship with it. He saw Râmlâlâ as vividly as he saw anyone else—now dancing, now springing on his back or insisting on being taken up in his arms. He became so much attached to Sri Ramakrishna that he refused to go with his devotee, who was finally obliged to leave him behind satisfied to see him happy in Sri Ramakrishna's company.

Sri Ramakrishna next took up the highest form of Vaishnava Sâdhanâ, the Madhura Bhâva or the relation between a mistress and her lover. All the Vaishnava forms of Sâdhanâ hinge on the one potent factor of human life—Love. This particular Sâdhanâ represents the closest union between the worshipper and the object of worship; he is not impressed by the grandeur of his Ideal but only the sweetness of the relationship interests him. The most beautiful example of this form of worship is found in Sri Krishna's life. The perfect devotee of this type is one who looks only to the comfort of the Beloved, regardless of his own personal pleasure or convenience. This Sâdhanâ roots out the sex idea. The soul has no sex; it is neither male nor female; it is the body which has sex. The man who desires to reach the Spirit must get rid of sex distinctions. Sri Ramakrishna took up this Sâdhanâ with his usual zeal. He brought the feminine idea into everything; he dressed and spoke like women and lived with the women in Mathura Babu's family. He made every little detail of their life his own till at last he found that the Truth could be gained as a woman too.

About this time Totâpuri, a Sannyâsin of the highest Vedântic realisation, came to Dakshineswar. Appreciating the spiritual gifts of Sri Ramakrishna he asked if he might teach him the secret of the Advaita philosophy. Under his guidance Sri Ramakrishna attained to Nirvikalpa Samâdhi, the state in which the soul realises its identity with Brahman, the highest, impersonal Truth, of which it is said, "If one remains in it continuously for twenty-one days, the body withers like dried leaves and the embodied soul realises its identity with Existence Absolute." It had taken Totapuri forty years to attain this Divine Consciousness. But Sri Ramakrishna attained it in a single day!

A wandering monk who hitherto had never stayed at a place for more than three days, Totapuri remained at Dakshineswar for eleven months, imparting his knowledge to his wonderful disciple, setting him firmly on the lofty heights of Advaita. The disciple, in his turn, became the guide of his teacher and enlightened him regarding the reality of the personal aspects of Truth which Totapuri had hitherto refused to recognise.

Meanwhile strange stories that he was mad were current in his native village. His wife Sâradâmani Devi resolved to learn the truth for herself. So she set out and walked to Dakshineswar. He at once admitted her right to be by his side and said, "As for me, the Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the only idea I can have about you. Yet as I have been married to you if you wish to draw me into the world I am at your service." The wife who was a pure and noble soul at once understood and said that she had no wish to bring him down to a worldly life; that all she wanted was to remain beside him, to serve him and to learn of him. Thus did Saradamani Devi, endowed with a rare spiritual fervour, become his first disciple. Sri Ramakrishna took up the task of teaching her, covering a wide range of subjects, from housekeeping to the knowledge of Brahman.

Some months after this there arose a desire in Sri Ramakrishna's mind to perform the Shorashi Pujâ or the worship of the Woman. On the night of the new moon Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Sarada Devi as the living symbol of the Divine Mother. During the ceremony she went into Samâdhi, as did the Master after finishing with the necessary rituals. Priest and Goddess were joined in a transcendental union in the Self. When the Master recovered he surrendered himself and the fruits of his life-long Sâdhanâ together with his rosary, with appropriate Mantras at the feet of Sarada Devi. It was the consummation of his Sâdhanâ and to him everything now became a symbol of God.

Sri Ramakrishna next sought to realise the ideals of other religions and found from personal experience that they also led him to the same goal which he had already attained through Hinduism. In his association with people of various sects and in comparing their realisations with his own he arrived at the conclusion that the ultimate aim of all religions was the realisation in different aspects of the one and the same Truth.

Among the innumerable aspects of divinity which Sri Ramakrishna realised, the one that stands out most prominently is that of Kâli, the Divine Mother whose emblem is death and destruction. She is the incarnation of time which engulfs all things. She is the form of Death which destroys all. Therefore, Her garlands are a necklace of skulls, and the garment about Her loins is composed of several arms, while in Her hand She holds a bleeding head. And yet Kâli is Brahman. For does not the idea of the Eternal rise in the mind when all ideas, temporal and mortal, have been eliminated?

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Kâli both as the Mother and as Brahman, in Her terrible forms as well as in the blessedness and bliss of Brahman. The Personal Kâli merged, in his realisation, in the Impersonal. To Sri Ramakrishna, She was also the giver of immortality. She puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts those of low degree. She fills the hungry with good things and the rich She sends empty away. To Her devotee the Mother reveals Herself as the Ocean of Reality, whose heart is the throbbing of the Infinite Soul. For him, Kâli held the scales of life and death, and the keys of wisdom and ignorance. At Her bidding the world begins the whirl of creation and at Her bidding it ends in destruction. Yet She is, also, ineffable Peace. Sri Ramakrishna saw the Mother in all things. He likewise realised Her as the indwelling Divinity of all souls. Though Her aspects be change, time, death and destruction, She is the everlasting, unchanging Reality of Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna often became possessed by the Mother. His ideas of Her assumed such reality that the conscious mind gave way, and his soul shone forth as the Mother Herself. Lost in Samâdhi, his whole body stiff, his arms unconsciously took the form of Varâbhaya.[1] The vastness of nature was translated by Sri Ramakrishna into the Living Reality of the Mother. Of what was embodied, She became the embodiment. Of what was ensouled She was the Soul. Beyond all and as all She dwelt incarnate as the Active Power of Supreme Reality. "Brahman, and Sakti are one," as Sri Ramakrishna would say, "even as fire and its heat, even as milk and its whiteness. The Reality when static is Brahman, when active it is Sakti, the Mother." She is absolutely beyond all speech and thought. Verily, She is the Brahman of the Vedas and the Vedânta.

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[1] The form of Kâli offering "boons" with one hand and "protection" with the other.

In the higher forms of Samâdhi, Sri Ramakrishna merged in the impersonal aspect of the Divine Mother. But for the fulfilment of the divine mission his mind had to be brought down, as if by force, to the phenomenal plane of consciousness. Then he regarded the world as the play of the Divine Mother. He, like a child, would place implicit trust in Her and follow Her guidance in everything, as will be seen.

Living in intimate union with the Divine Mother Sri Ramakrishna had a number of intuitive experiences towards the close of his Sâdhanâ period, some of which concerned himself while others related to spirituality in general. About himself Sri Ramakrishna came to the conclusion that he was an Incarnation of God, a specially commissioned personage, whose spiritual realisations were for the benefit of others, to usher in a new age of spirituality for mankind. Further, that he had always been a free soul and so the term Mukti was not applicable to him; at the same time he could not attain his own final liberation like an ordinary mortal but was compelled to be born again and again to show humanity the way to freedom. Lastly, he foresaw the time of his own passing away and gave certain clues about it which were subsequently verified.

About spiritual matters in general, the following were his convictions. As the result of his realisations through all forms of discipline, he was firmly convinced that all religions were true—that every religious system represented a path to God. Secondly, the three great systems of thought known as Dualism, qualified Monism and Monism—Dvaita, Visishtâdvaita and Advaita—were not contradictory, but complementary to one another; they were but stages in man's progress towards the Goal. As to action and inaction he said, "A man whose mind is absolutely pure naturally goes beyond action. He cannot work even if he tries to, or the Lord does not allow him to work. But the ordinary man must do his duties unattached, depending on the Lord,—like the maidservant in a house, who does everything for her master, but knows in her heart that her home is elsewhere." Thirdly, Sri Ramakrishna realised that through him the Mother would found a new Order, comprising those who would uphold the doctrines of universality illustrated in his life. And lastly, his spiritual insight told him that those who were in their last incarnation—those who had sincerely prayed to the Lord at least once—must come to him. The reader is at liberty to take this statement in a universal sense or in a mere personal way, as he chooses.

Firmly established in the consciousness of God and totally unified with the Cosmic Will, Sri Ramakrishna was eager to disseminate the results of his realisations to all eager aspirants for the Truth. He literally burned with that desire. About this he would say later, "There was no limit to the yearning I had then. In the day-time I managed somehow to control it. The secular talks of the worldly-minded were galling to me, and I would look wistfully to the day when my beloved companions[1] would come. I hoped to find solace in conversing with them and unburdening my mind by telling them about my realisations. Every little incident would make me think of them. I used to arrange in my mind what I should say to one and give to another, and so on. But when the day came to a close, I could not curb my feelings. Another day had gone and they had not come! When during the evening service the temple premises rang with the sound of bells and conch-shells, I would climb to the roof of the building in the garden, and writhing in anguish of heart cry at the top of my voice, 'Come, my boys! Oh, where are you all? I cannot bear to live without you!' A mother never longs so intensely for her child, nor a friend for his companions, nor a lover for his sweetheart, as I did for them! Oh, it was indescribable! Shortly after this yearning the devotees began to come in."

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[1] His future disciples.

To the fragrant fully blossomed lotus of the soul of Sri Ramakrishna came like bees, Gauri Pandit, Padmalochan, Vaishnavācharan, Sasadhar Tarkachudâmani, and a host of other great Pandits and Sâdhakas; Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratâp Chandra Mazumdar, Vijay Krishna Goswâmi and the great Nâg Mahâsaya; Christians, Mahomedans, Sikhs, and Hindus, hundreds upon hundreds. Great poets and thinkers, eminent preachers and theologians, professors and leaders of public opinion, the rich and the poor, great devotees and disciples came. And this was at the time that Narendra Nath was pining for the vision of Truth. Unconsciously attracted by the wonderful aroma of Sri Ramakrishna's realisations, he also came to Dakshineswar, he and that group of young men who were to become later the monks of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna.

VI

AT THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER

The Incarnations bear a special message for the world. Moved by compassion at the sight of the sorrows and miseries of afflicted humanity, the Lord who is beyond the contamination of ignorance incarnates Himself in this world, acknowledging a temporary allegiance, as it were, to All-powerful Mâyâ, His own inscrutable Power. His is only a translucent veil and he is aware, even from his very birth, of the special mission he has for the world. After an intense Sâdhanâ of some years the veil is rent and his real self shines forth, a consummation which takes an ordinary mortal thousands of births to attain. Then his power becomes irresistible. He revolutionises the world. His very presence radiates spirituality; his look and touch perform miracles. But an Incarnation, composed as he is of pure Sattva, light and wisdom, cannot, owing to his very nature, produce a mass effect upon humanity. Another personality is required with more Rajas,[1] who is capable of taking the ideas of the perfected one and giving them to the world. The inscrutable power which drags down the Lord from His High Throne to take birth as an Incarnation also projects a portion of Him, as it were, as a complementary being, for the fulfilment of his mission. In the fulness of time, the Incarnation seeks him out and makes him the conduit for his Gospel. The spiritual history of the world demonstrates the truth of this. Though surrounded by innumerable disciples and devotees, Christ had to choose a Peter as the rock upon which to build the foundation of His Church. Sri Krishna had Arjuna, Buddha had Ananda, Gouranga had Nityânanda,—all furnishing further evidence of this strange phenomenon. To Sri Ramakrishna, Narendra Nath played this complementary part.

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[1] The principle of activity.

At their first meeting Sri Ramakrishna instantaneously recognised that Naren was the one who was to carry his message to the world. Through his Nirvikalpa Samâdhi, Sri Ramakrishna had gained the power to identify himself with the cosmic mind in which this universe rises and disappears like a tiny bubble in the ocean. Past, present and future held no secret from him. He knew of the past happenings which are chronicled in the pages of nature as well as events which were to come. It was thus that Sri Ramakrishna was aware of the number of devoted souls who were born specially to assist him and the measure of help he would get from every one.

Sri Ramakrishna was the heart of old India, with its spiritual perspective, its asceticism and its realisations,—the India of the Upanishads. Naren came to him with all the doubts and scepticism of the modern age, unwilling to accept even the highest truths of religion without verification, yet with a burning zeal for the Truth raging within him. Naren had yet to learn that though reason is the best instrument in the relative world yet it cannot carry one beyond relativity into the realm of the Absolute where the truth of religion abides. The result of the contact of these two great personalities, Sri Ramakrishna and Narendra Nath, was Swami Vivekananda who was to become the heart of a New India, with the ancient spiritual perspective heightened, widened and strengthened to include modern learning; old ideals assimilating the new. The intense activity of the West was to be combined with the deep meditation of the East. Asceticism and retirement were to be supplemented by work and service to others. From the merging of these two currents came Neo-Hinduism, the faith of a glorious To-morrow, in which all should be fulfilment and nothing denial.

From a personal point of view the meeting was likewise extraordinary. It is better to give Sri Ramakrishna's own account, in brief, of the first visit of his greatest disciple:

"Narendra entered this room by the western door. He seemed careless about his body and dress, and unlike other people, unmindful of the external world. His eyes bespoke an introspective mind, as if some part of it were always concentrated upon something within. I was surprised to find such a spiritual soul coming from the material atmosphere of Calcutta. A mat was spread on the floor. He sat on it just near the place where you now see the big jar containing the water of the Ganges. The friends with whom he had come appeared to be ordinary young men with the usual tendencies towards enjoyment. He sang a few Bengali songs at my request. One of it was a common song of the Brâhmo Samâj, which begins,—

'O my mind, go to your
own abode.
In the foreign land of
this world
Why roam uselessly like
a stranger!'

"He sang the song with his whole heart and put such pathos in it that I could no longer control myself, but fell into an ecstatic mood.

"Then he took leave. But after that I felt such a constant agonising desire to see him! At times the pain would be so excruciating that I felt as if my heart were being squeezed like a wet towel! Then I could no longer check myself. I ran to the northern quarter of the garden, a rather unfrequented place, and there cried at the top of my voice, 'O my darling, come to me! I cannot live without seeing you!' After some time, I felt better. This state of things continued for six months. There were other boys who also came here; I felt greatly drawn towards some of them, but nothing like the way I was attracted towards Narendra."

Narendra too was profoundly moved at his first visit to the Master. He told some of his friends of it later, though with some reserve:

"Well, I sang the song, but shortly after he suddenly rose and taking me by the hand led me to the northern verandah, shutting the door behind him. It was locked from the outside; so we were alone. I thought that he would give me some private instructions. But to my utter surprise he began to shed profuse tears of joy as he held my hand, and addressing me most tenderly as one long familiar to him, said, 'Ah, you come so late! How could you be so unkind as to keep me waiting so long! My ears are well-nigh burnt in listening to the profane talks of worldly people. Oh, how I yearn to unburden my mind to one who can appreciate my innermost experience!' Thus he went on amid sobs. The next moment he stood before me with folded hands and began to address me, 'Lord, I know you are that ancient sage, Nara—the Incarnation of Nârâyana—born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind,' and so on!

"I was altogether taken aback by his conduct. 'Who is this man whom I have come to see,' I thought, 'he must be stark mad! Why, I am but the son of Viswanath Datta, and yet he dares to address me thus!' But I kept quiet allowing him to go on. Presently he went back to his room, and bringing some sweets, sugar candy and butter, began to feed me with his own hands. In vain did I say again and again, 'Please give the sweets to me, I shall share them with my friends!' He simply said, 'They may have some afterwards,' and desisted only after I had eaten all. Then he seized me by the hand and said, 'Promise that you will come alone to me at an early date.' At his importunity I had to say 'yes' and returned with him to my friends."

To the others ranged about Sri Ramakrishna, some of whom were old, some middle-aged and some lads of Naren's age, but all convinced of his holiness, he said, "Behold! how Naren beams with the light of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning!" Those who heard him say this looked upon Naren with wonder. Not only was it strange that the Master should speak thus, it was still more strange that he should have seen such profound spirituality in this boy. "Do you see a light before falling asleep?" asked Sri Ramakrishna. Narendra said, "Yes, sir." The Master cried, "Ah! It is true. This one is a Dhyâna-Siddha—an adept in meditation even from his very birth."

Regarding his conflicting thoughts about the strange words and actions of Sri Ramakrishna, Narendra Nath used to say:

"I sat and watched him. There was nothing wrong in his words, movements or behaviour towards others. Rather from his spiritual words and ecstatic states he seemed to be a man of genuine renunciation, and there was a marked consistency between his words and life. He used the most simple language, and I thought, 'Can this man be a great teacher?'—I crept near to him and asked him the question which I had asked so often: 'Have you seen God, sir?' 'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.' 'God can be realised,' he went on, 'one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.' That impressed me at once. For the first time I found a man who dared to say that he had seen God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world. As I heard these things from his lips, I could not but believe that he was saying them not like an ordinary preacher but from the depths of his own realisations. But I could not reconcile his words with his strange conduct with me. So I concluded that he must be a monomaniac. Yet I could not help acknowledging the magnitude of his renunciation. 'He may be a madman,' I thought, 'but only the fortunate few can have such renunciation. Even if insane, this man is the holiest of the holy, a true saint, and for that alone he deserves the reverential homage of mankind!' With such conflicting thoughts I bowed before him and begged his leave to return to Calcutta."

Though Naren considered him to be a madman, he was at a loss to account for the strange feeling of blessedness that came over him as he sat near the Master. But it was all strange—the number of adoring devotees, the unaccountable religious ecstasy of the Master, his return from ecstasy, the atmosphere of intense blessedness, his words, the uplifting of his own soul—all these were bewildering to Naren. But in spite of the impression made by the Master, Naren was slow to accept him as teacher and allowed the thousand and one preoccupations of his daily life to prevent him from keeping his promise to repeat his visit, and it was nearly a month later that he set out alone on foot to the temple-garden of Dakshineswar. The following is the description of this momentous meeting given by Narendra to some of his brother-disciples:

"I did not realise then that the temple-garden of Dakshineswar was so far from Calcutta, as on the previous occasion I had gone there in a carriage. The road seemed to me so long as to be almost endless. However, I reached the garden somehow and went straight to Sri Ramakrishna's room. I found him sitting alone on the small bedstead. He was glad to see me and calling me affectionately to his side, made me sit beside him on his bed. But the next moment I found him overcome with a sort of emotion. Muttering something to himself, with his eyes fixed on me, he slowly drew near me. I thought he might do something queer as on the previous occasion. But in the twinkling of an eye he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open I saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled rapidly and vanished into naught, and the whole universe together with my individuality was about to merge in an all-encompassing mysterious Void! I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself I cried out, 'What is it that you are doing to me! I have my parents at home!' He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said, 'All right, let it rest now. Everything will come in time!' The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it had been before.

"All this happened in less time than it takes me to narrate it, but it revolutionised my mind. Amazed I thought, what could it possibly be? It came and went at the mere wish of this wonderful man! I began to question if it were mesmerism or hypnotism. But that was not likely, for these acted only on weak minds, and I prided myself on being just the reverse. I had not as yet surrendered myself to the stronger personality of the man. Rather I had taken him to be a monomaniac. So to what might this sudden transformation of mine be due? I could not come to any conclusion. It was an enigma, I thought, which I had better not attempt to solve. I was determined, however, to be on my guard and not to give him another chance to exert a similar influence over me.

"The next moment I thought, how can a man who shatters to pieces a resolute and strong mind like mine be dismissed as a lunatic? Yet that was just the conclusion at which one would arrive from his effusiveness on our first meeting,—unless he was an Incarnation of God, which was indeed a far cry. So I was in a dilemma about the real nature of my experience as well as the truth about this remarkable man, who was obviously pure and simple as a child. My rationalistic mind received an unpleasant rebuff at this failure in judging the true state of things. But I was determined to fathom the mystery somehow.

"Thoughts like these occupied my mind during the whole of that day. But he became quite another man after that incident and, as on the previous occasion, treated me with great kindness and cordiality. His behaviour towards me was like that of a man who meets an old friend or relative after a long separation. He seemed not to be satisfied with entertaining and taking all possible care of me. This remarkably loving treatment drew me all the more to him. At last, finding that the day was coming to a close, I asked his leave to go. He seemed very much dejected at this and gave me his permission only after I had promised to come again at my earliest convenience."

A few days after the above experience, Narendra Nath paid his third visit to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar and though he was determined not to be influenced yet he fared no better than the other times. Sri Ramakrishna took him that day to the adjacent garden of Jadunâth Mallik. After a stroll in the garden they sat down in the parlour. Soon Sri Ramakrishna fell into a trance and touched Narendra Nath. In spite of all his precautions Naren was totally overwhelmed and immediately lost all outward consciousness. When he came to after a while, he found the Master stroking his chest.

Naren had no idea of the happenings of this period, but it was then that the Master learned many strange things about him. Referring to this incident, he said later on, "I put several questions to him while he was in that state. I asked him about his antecedents and where he lived, his mission in this world and the duration of his mortal life. He dived deep into himself and gave fitting answers to my questions. They only confirmed what I had seen and inferred about him. Those things shall be a secret, but I came to know that he was a sage who had attained perfection, a past master in meditation, and that the day he knew his real nature, he would give up the body, by an act of will, through Yoga."

It is interesting to learn what revelations the

Master had of his greatest disciple even before his arrival at Dakshineswar. This is how he described them:

"One day I found that my mind was soaring high in Samâdhi along a luminous path. It soon transcended the stellar universe and entered the subtler region of ideas. As it ascended higher and higher I found on both sides of the way ideal forms of gods and goddesses. The mind then reached the outer limits of that region, where a luminous barrier separated the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. Crossing that barrier, the mind entered the transcendental realm, where no corporeal being was visible. Even the gods dared not peep into that sublime realm, but had to be content to keep their seats far below. The next moment I found seven venerable sages seated there in Samâdhi. It occurred to me that these sages must have surpassed not only men but even the gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. Lost in admiration I was reflecting on their greatness, when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine child. The child came to one of the sages, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely little arms, and addressing him in a sweet voice attempted to drag his mind down from the state of Samâdhi. The magic touch roused the sage from his superconscious state, and he fixed his unmoving, half-open gaze upon that wonderful child. His beaming countenance showed that the child must have been the treasure of his heart. In great joy the strange child said to him, 'I am going down. You too must go with me.' The sage remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent. As he kept gazing on the child, he was again immersed in Samâdhi. I was surprised to find that a fragment of his body and mind was descending on earth in the form of an effulgent light. No sooner had I seen Naren than I recognised him to be that sage."[1]

On another occasion, Sri Ramakrishna in a vision saw a streak of light flash across the sky from Benares towards Calcutta. In great joy he exclaimed, "My prayer has been granted and *my man* must come to me one day."

Now it is apparent that Naren's inability to discover what had happened during his trance was due to the will of the Master who thought it best that his disciple should not be aware of the highest state too soon. He was not as yet prepared for it and would only have been terrified. And when Naren was in that state of Samâdhi, the Master turned the subconscious currents of Naren's nature, by force as it were, into the superconscious channel, working a great transformation in his mind. So, little by little he began to regard Sri Ramakrishna not as a madman, but as the only sane man among the myriad lunatics of the world, who dwell in the asylum of selfishness and desire, bound down in the prison-house of lust and gold. Still the strange words Sri Ramakrishna addressed to him at the first meeting were an anomaly to him. The full significance of the part he was to play with the Master came to him later after repeated tests and trials.

Naren was the Master's from the moment the Master touched him. It was a possession however which meant the highest freedom for Naren's soul. He lost many of his cherished convictions, for instance, that a Guru was not necessary. How could a man, he had reasoned, necessarily weak and short-visioned, be the unerring guide that implicit obedience demands? Now he realised that it was possible that such a man could exist and that his help and influence would be of inestimable value. His faith in asceticism and renunciation was strengthened by coming in contact with the Master. He devoted himself with his entire heart and soul to the task of realising God, willingly accepting from Sri Ramakrishna the necessary advice and help which appealed to his reason, but only after a searching analysis of the Master's realisations and mode of life.

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[1] Subsequent inquiry elicited from Sri Ramakrishna the fact that the divine child was none other than himself.

Narendra was a sceptic, with no faith in the Hindu gods. He laughed at many of the injunctions of the Hindu scriptures. He was not one to silence the questionings of his mind. He would not drive off a doubt with the lash of a fanatic creed. Open was his soul to all that might come in. At first came darkness, appalling darkness, intensified by anguish. Even here he tried to see; and when the gloom was blackest and he was beginning to ask himself if he might not be chasing phantoms, a faint light as of the dawning of Truth became apparent. This gave him hope to go on in the face of failures and increasing doubts. Still dissatisfied he demanded the actual vision. The more he struggled against doubt, the more insistently it arose within the silence of the soul. He was however a born sailor on the ocean of the struggle for Reality and his sailor's instinct kept him up, for Naren was confident that beatific knowledge must come as a triumphant climax to all his struggles and sufferings.

Sri Ramakrishna understood and loved Naren the better for all this turmoil, for he himself had had to pass through upheavals, which, though they were tempests of the soul instead of the mind as in Naren's case, were similar in their cause and intensity. He saw that Naren's intellect, because of the very intensity of his desire for the Truth would always doubt; but he saw as well that Naren would conquer in the end, that he would transcend all limitations and become a spiritual giant. So he continued to guide and instruct him with infinite love and patience.

Hereafter Naren's life is that of the Saint-in-the-making. It is no longer his mind to which one pays attention, though it becomes more and more luminous as the years go on; it is his heart, his very soul, his vision that captivates attention. A time was coming when the whole orb of his soul was to shine forth with the radiance and glory of the full moon. He was to attain unto the very highest possibilities of the mystical consciousness, wherein the soul and the Supreme Reality are revealed as a perfect and indistinguishable Unity. In that imperious question, "Mahâsaya, have you seen God?" asked by Naren of the Maharshi Debendra Nath, is the dawn of his spiritual life. Before that the intellect ruled and doubt was supreme; but even then were heard, though faintly so, the stirrings of an approaching dawn, which grew into the day of glorious vision in the effulgent presence of Sri Ramakrishna, the Sun of Truth.

VII

THE GURU AND THE DISCIPLE

During his training with Sri Ramakrishna, the story of Naren's life is to be told in terms of ideas and realisations. Wonderful was the relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and Naren, the full account of which can never be given. So close, so deep was their love and regard for each other, that the disciples of both, always think of them as two souls in one—Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. For the thought of the one implies the awareness of the other. From the first, it was a spiritual relationship without the slightest tinge of worldliness. From the moment that Naren came to the Master and asked, "Sir, have you seen God?" began the spiritual growth of the disciple ending in illumination. The climax was reached when the spirit of the Master, before he left the body, descended upon the disciple. This relationship served a great impersonal purpose,—the revival of the religion of the Vedas and the preaching of the Modern Gospel to the peoples of the earth.

Great Teachers who have themselves realised the highest spiritual Truth, when they come in touch with a fit disciple, are eager to impart that Truth. Sri Ramakrishna recognised Naren's great spiritual potentialities. But, at the same time, Naren needed the ripening influence of time, as we see by his terror of losing his individuality, when the Master tried to put him into Nirvikalpa Samâdhi. Sri Ramakrishna once referred wittily to this incident and said to Naren, "A man died and became an evil spirit and was anxious to get a companion. Whenever it heard that someone had passed away it would at once go to the place hoping to get a companion, but every time returned disappointed, because the soul had been liberated through some act or other of piety. Such is the case with me. As soon as I saw you I thought I had a friend, but you too said that you had father and mother at home! I am therefore living alone without a companion like the spirit in the story.''

Sri Ramakrishna's love for Naren was so deep that if Naren failed to come to Dakshineswar for some days he would become disconsolate. He would weep and would pray to the Divine Mother, begging Her to make him come and refusing to be comforted in the meantime. The other devotees did not understand,—nor did Naren. Sometimes he regarded Sri Ramakrishna as an old man subject to hallucinations; at other times he was overcome by the Master's affection and lovingly responded to it. It was really the Master's love which enabled Naren to hold on until he could appreciate him intellectually. Something ''held'' him, as it were. As Naren said at that time, ''It is his love for me that binds me to him.''

Once Narendra did not appear at Dakshineswar for several days and Sri Ramakrishna was much disturbed. One day two devotees, Râmdayâl and Bâburâm, came to see the Master. Sri Ramakrishna asked Ramdayal about Narendra Nath and said, ''Well, he has not come here for a long time. I long to see him. Will you please ask him to come here soon? You won't forget it?'' The visitors remained there for the night. At about 11 o'clock at night when every one had retired to bed, Sri Ramakrishna with his cloth under his arm suddenly approached them and said to Ramdayal, ''Well, are you asleep?'' ''No, sir,'' replied Ramdayal and both hurriedly sat up. "Look here. Please tell Naren to come. I feel as if somebody were wringing my heart like a wet towel,"—Sri Ramakrishna said, twisting his cloth., Ramdayal, who was familiar with the childlike simplicity of Sri Ramakrishna's character, consoled him in various ways and assured him that he would persuade Naren to come to Dakshineswar. At the same time the two devotees were greatly puzzled by Sri Ramakrishna's eagerness to see Narendra. This scene was repeated several times during the night.

Another devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Vaikuntha Nâth Sânyâl, once found the Master very restless on account of the prolonged absence of Narendra Nath. Vaikuntha said later on, "The Master was that day full of praise of Narendra Nath. Talking about him made him so desirous of seeing him that he was completely overwhelmed, and could no longer control himself; he hurried to the adjacent verandah and cried out 'Blessed Mother, I cannot live without seeing him.' When he returned he said to us, in a voice full of grief, 'I have wept so much, and yet Narendra has not come. My heart is being squeezed as it were, so excruciating is the pain at not seeing him. But he does not care.' He left the room again but soon returned and said, 'An old man pining and weeping for the boy! What will people think of me? You are my own people; I do not feel ashamed to confess it before you. But how will others take it? I cannot control myself.' But his joy was correspondingly great when Naren came. At one time when the devotees were celebrating the Master's birthday at Dakshineswar, and the beloved disciple did not come until noon, he asked about him again and again. When Naren finally appeared and bowed before him, the Master leaned on his shoulder and fell into deep Samâdhi. When he returned to normal consciousness he fed and caressed Naren. Often, the mere sight of Naren would send the Master into Samâdhi. Once when he had not seen him for some time, he went to meet him at the landing ghat at Dakshineswar, and touching the disciple's face began to chant the most holy word of the Vedas and went into Samâdhi.

During the five years of Narendra's discipleship he went to see the Master once or twice a week. Sometimes he would stay over for a few days. During the last years family troubles prevented him from going to Dakshineswar as frequently as he would have wished. Sri Ramakrishna consoled himself during those days with the thought, "It is good that Naren does not come,—for I experience a commotion of feeling when I see him. His coming makes a great event here."

Sri Ramakrishna's greatest attractions in Naren's eyes were his renunciation, purity and constant devotion to God; whereas, in his disciple the Master respected the unbounded self-reliance, manly spirit and single-minded devotion to Truth. It is impossible for us to describe Sri Ramakrishna's faith in Naren. Ordinary people looked upon Naren's self-reliance as foolhardiness. His manliness appeared to them as obstinacy. His uncompromising regard for Truth was described as evidence of an immature intellect. People could not understand his supreme disregard for praise or contumely, his childlike frankness and, above all, his spirit of freedom and fearlessness in thought, speech and action. But Sri Ramakrishna from the very outset knew the apparent vanity and obstinacy of Narendra Nath to be but the manifestations of his self-reliance and the consciousness of his uncommon mental powers, his freedom in thought and action to be the outcome of self-control, and his great indifference to human praise or blame to be due to the purity of his heart. He foresaw that when the latent genius of Narendra Nath would develop into full maturity, the apparent pride and stubbornness would be transformed into love and pity for the afflicted, his self-reliance would inspire the hopeless and the despondent with courage and manliness, and his love of freedom would show mankind the way to liberation.

He used to call Naren and a few others Nityasiddhas, perfect even from birth. "What training they go through," he used to say, "they do not need for themselves; it is for the good of the world." Indeed the Master thought so highly of Naren that if anybody spoke disparagingly of him he would remonstrate with the speaker saying, "What are you doing! You are committing Sivanindâ!" meaning that to speak slightingly of Naren was as bad as blasphemy. He would also say, "Let no one judge Naren. No one will ever be able to understand him fully." Once when a devotee brought the news to him that Naren was falling into evil ways by mixing with persons of questionable character, Sri Ramakrishna took him sharply to task saying, "That is not true. Mother has told me that Naren can never fall into evil ways. If you talk to me in that strain any more I shall never see you again." Sri Ramakrishna never hesitated to praise Naren before his devotees. He knew well that such encomiums might give rise to pride and vanity in weaker minds, but he was convinced that Narendra was above such pettiness and narrowness. One day Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room with Kesab Chandra Sen, Vijay Krishna Goswami and other celebrated leaders of the Brâhmo Samâj. Narendra Nath was also present. The Master, in an exalted mood, cast his eyes upon the Brâhmos and then on Naren, and a picture of the latter's future greatness flashed across his mind, and he was filled with tenderness for the disciple. After the meeting was over he said to some devotees, "Well, if Kesab is possessed of one mark of greatness which has made him famous, Naren has eighteen such marks. In Kesab and Vijay I saw the light of knowledge burning like a candle-flame, but in Narendra it was like a blazing sun, dispelling the last vestige of ignorance and delusion." An ordinary man would have become inflated at such compliments. But Naren was quite different. In comparison with Kesab and Vijay he thought himself very insignificant and he protested to the Master, "Sir, why do you say such things! People will think you mad. How can you compare the world-renowned Kesab and the saintly Vijay with an insignificant young student like me? Please do not do so again." At this Sri Ramakrishna was pleased and said, "I cannot help it. Do you think those were my words! The Divine Mother showed me certain things which I simply repeated. And She never reveals to me anything but the truth." This reference to divine revelation for support did not impress Narendra Nath. He doubted and said frankly and boldly, "Who knows if these are the revelations from the Mother or the mere fancies of your brain? If I were in your position I would attribute them to imagination, pure and simple. Western science and philosophy have demonstrated that we are often deceived by our senses, and the chances of deception are much more when there is a personal predisposition thereto. Since you love me and always wish to see me great, it is but natural that these fancies come into your mind." When the Master's mind was on higher planes he would take no notice of Naren's words; at other times Naren's apparently incontrovertible reasoning upset him. In his perplexity the Master appealed to the Divine Mother and was comforted when She said, "Why do you care for what he says? In a few days he will admit every word of it to be true!"

But the eulogistic opinion of Sri Ramakrishna served to give Naren great strength of will and inspiration, especially in later years when as the Swami Vivekananda he was preaching his great message to the world.

Once several days elapsed between Naren's visits to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna became very anxious and sent for him. But Naren did not come. Thereupon Sri Ramakrishna set out for Calcutta himself. Surmising that Naren would be present at the evening services of the Brâhmo Samâj, it was there that he directed his steps. He had often visited the Samâj and knew intimately many of its prominent members. The service was already in progress when Sri Ramakrishna in a semi-conscious state made his appearance. The preacher broke off his sermon, and the congregation stared at the new-comer. Sri Ramakrishna, unmindful of the commotion his presence was causing, advanced slowly to the pulpit and fell into a superconscious state! This further heightened the curiosity of the assembly and the disorder increased. Some of the leading Brâhmos present, connecting Sri Ramakrishna with a recent split in their camp because Kesab and Vijay had changed their views under his influence, considered this visit an intrusion. They turned off the lights in order to bring order. This only added to the confusion and everybody rushed towards the door! Naren who was in the choir guessed the reason of the Master's visit and went instantly to his rescue, conducted him through the crowd to the back-door and so on to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna paid no heed to Naren's expostulations as to the wisdom of his action and was not in the least repentant.

Naren would say, "I did not hesitate to use harsh words for his blind love for me. I used to warn him saying that if he constantly thought of me he would become like me,—just like King Bharata of the old legend, who so doted upon his pet deer that even at the time of death he was unable to think of anything else, and, as a result, was born as a deer in his next life. At these words, Sri Ramakrishna, so simple was he, became very nervous, and said, 'What you say is quite true. What is to become of me, for I cannot bear to be separated from you?' Sadly dejected, he went to the Kâli temple, whence he returned in a few minutes smiling and said, 'You rogue, I would not listen to you any more. Mother says that I love you because I see the Lord in you, and the day I shall no longer do so, I shall not be able to bear even the sight of you.' By this short but emphatic statement he dismissed once for all everything that I had ever said to him on the subject."

This was really the key to Sri Ramakrishna's overwhelming love for Naren and his other disciples. The Master had dignified their relationship beyond any human or personal sentiment.

On another occasion referring to his relationship with Naren and the other young boys, Sri Ramakrishna said, "Hâzrâ took me to task because I am anxious to see the boys. He said, 'When do you think of God?' I felt uneasy and said to Mother, 'Hazra asks why I should think so much of Naren and the other boys.' And Mother at once showed me that She Herself was in all human forms. She manifests Herself specially in pure bodies. When I came out of this Samâdhi, I was angry with

Hazra and said, 'Oh, what a fool! How he unsettled my mind!' But to myself, 'Why blame the poor fellow! How could he know!' "

The Master continued, "I regard these boys as embodied Narayana. When I saw Naren for the first time I recognised that he had no body-idea. As soon as I touched him in the region of the heart he lost outward consciousness. Gradually intense longing came upon me to see him again and again, and it filled my heart with pain. Then I said to Bholânâth (an officer of the Kâli temple), 'How is it that I feel this,—and that for a boy, a Kâyastha by caste?' And Bholanath said, 'Sir, that is all right. It is explained in the Mahabharata that when the mind of a man of Samâdhi comes down to the normal plane, it finds recreation only in the company of men of Sattva quality, men of the highest spirituality.' This comforted me."

Once Naren was seated in his study with some of his friends. He had not visited Dakshineswar for some time. During the conversation, a voice was heard calling out, "Naren! Naren!" All started to their feet. Naren hastened down the stairs to receive Sri Ramakrishna for it was he who had come. His eyes were filled with tears. "Naren, why do you not come to see me these days?" he asked. He was as simple as a child. He had brought with him some sweetmeats with which he fed Naren with his own hands. Ah! Indeed! Wonderful is the way the Lord points out the paths of illumination to the struggling and sincere devotee! The Lord Himself comes to him who looks for Him, the Teacher to the disciple when the latter is prepared. "Come!" Sri Ramakrishna urged, "Sing me one of your songs." Naren took his musical instrument, the Tânpurâ, and began a song to the Divine Mother. The others sat still. In a few minutes Sri Ramakrishna became unconscious to all outward things.

In one of Naren's early visits to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "Behold, in you is Siva! And in me is Sakti! And these two are One!" Naren, of course, was not able to understand the meaning of such utterances then. It is singular to note that Naren was rarely allowed to offer any act of personal service to the Master, such as fanning and the like—services which the disciple is supposed to render to his spiritual guide during his training. Was it that Sri Ramakrishna saw the Divine, the Siva, so intensely in Naren, that he held him too sacred to do any Sevâ or service to him? For Sevâ is only for the purification of heart; what need has he for Sevâ whose heart is already pure! Let it not be thought however, that Naren did not feel this as a great deprivation. He would insist on offering service in some way or other, for love of the Master and through his own sense of humility; but the Master would seldom allow it, saying, "Your path is different!"

Sri Ramakrishna's relationship with and attitude towards Narendra differed a great deal from his treatment of the other disciples. With them he always observed great restrictions, as regards food, meditation, prayer, sleep and other affairs of daily life. There were no such restrictions with Naren. He would say, "Naren is a Nitya-siddha, perfect in realisation even from his very birth; Naren is Dhyâna-siddha, an adept in meditation; the roaring fire of knowledge which is always ablaze in Naren burns to ashes whatever impure food he may take. Impurity of food can never tarnish his pure mind. He is always cutting to pieces the veils of Mâyâ by the sword of knowledge. The inscrutable

Mâyâ can never bring him under Her control." When any admirer came to Dakshineswar with offerings of fruits and sweetmeats for the Master, they would be set aside, not to be eaten by himself or given to the disciples unless he was sure that the donor was pure in character and unselfish in motive. But he allowed Naren to take them. Nothing could affect him, he said, and sometimes, when Naren did not make his appearance, the Master would even send the delicacies to Naren's home. Sometimes after eating at a hotel Naren would say to the Master, "Sir, I have eaten today what is considered forbidden food." Sri Ramakrishna, realising that Naren was not speaking in a spirit of bravado, would say, "That would not affect you in the least. If one can keep his mind steadfast upon God after partaking of beef or of pork, these things are as good as Havishyânna.[1] But vegetables eaten by a man engrossed in worldliness are no better than pork or beef. That you have taken forbidden food does not make any difference to me. But if any of these (pointing to the other devotees) had done so, I could not even bear to have them touch me."

Narendra wondered at this discrimination exercised as to food and the receiving of presents from certain persons. He thought it was perhaps superstitious eccentricity or puritanical squeamishness. But Sri Ramakrishna insisted that when he refused to accept offerings it was because the giver was of questionable character. This interested Naren. Was it true? He determined to find out for himself. He observed and studied the characters of those whose offerings the Master had rejected and he found that in every case Sri Ramakrishna had acted rightly. Amazed, he said to himself, "What a wonderful man is this! His purity is past understanding. How he can read the minds of others!"

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[1] Rice specially prepared and taken with clarified butter

Sri Ramakrishna was delighted when Naren engaged himself in arguments with the other devotees. Naren would storm their minds, startling them with the profundity of his knowledge as he cited Western and Eastern philosophers. For it was not mere learning which Naren revealed, it was the very spirit of learning which seemed incarnate in him. The Master's delight knew no bounds when he found others much older than Naren unable to withstand Naren's reasoning power.

As a member of the Brâhmo Samâj, Naren was committed to a belief in a formless God with attributes. thus turning his back on the gods of Hinduism. In his enthusiasm he had persuaded Rakhal, another of Sri Ramakrishna's great disciples, to embrace the Brâhmo creed. But Rakhal was really a great devotee whose latent devotional fervour was roused to the highest pitch when he came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna. When he went with the Master to the Kâli temple he bowed down before the images, which was against the Brâhmo creed to which he had subscribed. One day Naren saw him, and took him to task. Rakhal possessed a very gentle nature, and rather than argue he avoided Naren. Sri Ramakrishna intervened and said to Naren, "Please do not intimidate Rakhal. He is afraid of you. He believes now in God with forms. How are you going to change him? Every one cannot realise the formless aspect of God at the very beginning." That was enough for Narendra and he never interfered with Rakhal's religious views again.

Sometimes Naren revealed a tendency to fanaticism. Sri Ramakrishna would admonish him, "My boy, try to see the Truth from all angles and through every perspective.'' This tendency to bigotry disappeared when Naren realised the oneness of all spiritual endeavour and religious belief. But he continued to argue against image worship with Sri Ramakrishna. One day Sri Ramakrishna, tired of trying to convince him that the images worshipped were but the presentment of spiritual ideals, said, ''Why do you come here if you won't acknowledge my Mother?'' Naren replied courageously, ''Must I accept Her simply because I come here?'' ''All right,'' said the Master, ''ere long you shall not only acknowledge my Blessed Mother, but weep in Her name.'' Then to the other devotees he said, ''This boy has no faith in the forms of God and tells me that my supersensuous experiences are hallucinations, but he is a fine boy of pure instincts. He does not believe anything unless he gets direct proof. He has studied much and is possessed of great judgment and discrimination.''

One of the bones of contention between the Master and Naren was the Râdhâ-Krishna episode of the Hindu scriptures. In the first place Narendra doubted the historicity of the tale and in the second, he considered the relationship of Krishna to Radha immoral and objectionable. Unable to convince him, Sri Ramakrishna said one day, ''Admitted that as a historical personality Radha did not exist and that the tale is purely an imagination of some devoted lover of God, why not fix your mind only on the intense yearning of Radha and the Gopis for That which is the Supreme? Why dwell on the expression? Though that may appear human to you, you must take the yearning and the vision as divine.''

But the Master was glad in his heart that Naren was a rebel, for without intellectual strain and struggle no one can arrive at real illumination; besides his own struggles would be helpful later in understanding and solving the difficulties of others. At the same time, the difficulties of Naren, his whole struggle and gradual realisation, prove the rare quality of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching, revealing him as the living Incarnation of Hinduism.

From the first it was Sri Ramakrishna's idea to initiate Narendra into the mysteries of the Advaita Vedânta. With that end in mind he would ask Naren to read aloud passages from Ashtâvakra Samhitâ and other Advaita treatises, in order to familiarise him with the philosophy. To Narendra, a staunch adherent of the Brâhmo Samâj, these writings seemed heretical and he would rebel saying, "It is blasphemous, for there is no difference between such philosophy and atheism. There is no greater sin in the world than to think of myself as identical with the Creator. I am God, you are God, these created things are God,—what can be more absurd than this! The sages who wrote such things must have been insane." Sri Ramakrishna would be amused at this bluntness and would only remark, "You may not accept the views of these seers. But how can you abuse them or limit God's infinitude? Go on praying to the God of Truth and believe in any aspect of His which He reveals to you." But Naren did not surrender easily. Whatever did not tally with reason, he considered to be false, and it was his nature to stand against falsehood. Therefore he missed no opportunity to ridicule the Advaita philosophy.

But the Master knew that Narendra's was the path of Jnâna; for this reason he made it a point to continue to talk of the Advaita philosophy to him. One day he tried to bring home to him the identity of the individual soul with Brahman, but without success. Narendra left the room and going to Pratap Chandra Hazra said, "How can this be? This jug is God, this cup is God and we too are God: Nothing can be more preposterous!" Sri Ramakṛishna, who was in his room in a state of semi-consciousness, hearing Naren's laughter came out with his cloth under his arm like a child. "Hallo! what are you talking about?" he said smiling, touched Narendra and plunged into Samâdhi. The effect of the touch Naren described:

"The magic touch of the Master, that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! I saw it quite clearly but kept silent, to see if the idea would last. But the impression did not abate in the course of the day. I returned home, but there too, everything I saw appeared to be Brahman. I sat down to take my meal, but found that everything—the food, the plate, the person who served and even myself—was nothing but That. I ate a morsel or two and sat still. I was startled by my mother's words, 'Why do you sit still? Finish your meal,'—and began to eat again. But all the while, whether eating or lying down, or going to College, I had the same experience and felt myself always in a sort of comatose state. While walking in the streets, I noticed cabs plying, but I did not feel inclined to move out of the way. I felt that the cabs and myself were of one stuff. There was no sensation in my limbs, which I thought, were getting paralysed. I did not relish eating, and felt as if somebody else were eating. Sometimes I lay down during a meal and after a few minutes got up and again began to eat. The result would be that on some days I would take too much, but it did no harm. My mother became alarmed and said that there must be something wrong with me. She was afraid that I might not live long. When the above state altered a little, the world began to appear to me as a dream. While walking in Cornwallis Square, I would strike my head against the iron railings to see if they were real or only a dream. This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again I realised that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy."

Such was the greatness of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna; and such the training of Naren. Little by little Naren was led from doubt to beatitude, from darkness to light, from anguish of mind to the certainty of bliss, from the seething vortex of the world to the grand expanse of universal Oneness. He was taken, little by little, and by the power of Sri Ramakrishna, out of bondage into infinite freedom, from the pale of a little learning into that omniscience which is the consciousness of Brahman. He was lifted out of all objective conceptions of the Godhead into the glorious awareness of the subjective nature of True Being, above form, above thought, above sense, above all relative good and evil, into the sameness and Reality and the absolute beyondness of Brahman. The scene of Naren's highest realisation was the Cossipore garden and the time of the occurrence, the immediate future. Now did Naren's regard for the Master increase a thousandfold; he was beginning to accept him as the highest ideal of spirituality.

Again and again the Master told his disciples to test his realisations. "Test me as the money-changers test their coins. You must not accept me until you have tested me thoroughly." One day whilst the Master was absent in Calcutta Naren came to Dakshineswar and found Sri Ramakrishna's room empty. A desire arose in him to test Sri Ramakrishna's renunciation of gold. So he secreted a rupee under the bed and then went to meditate under the Panchavati. Soon Sri Ramakrishna returned. He sat upon the bed. Directly he touched it, he started back in great pain. Naren who had returned stood watching silently. An attendant at once examined the bed; as he pulled off the covering the coin fell to the ground. Naren left the room without uttering a word. Ramakrishna realised that he had been tested by Naren and rejoiced.

But the disciples were tested in their turn by Sri Ramakrishna. Even Naren had to pass through many ordeals before the Master accepted him. He examined Naren's body thoroughly and remarked one day; "Your physical signs are good. The only fault I find is that you breathe rather heavily while asleep. Such a man, the Yogis say, is shortlived." On another occasion the Master said, "Your eyes show that you are not a dry Jnâni. In you are blended tender devotion and deep knowledge." As a result of these investigations Sri Ramakrishna concluded that Naren possessed in a rare degree spirituality, boldness, restraint and the spirit of self-sacrifice; that never even in the midst of the most adverse circumstances would his actions be ordinary.

On one occasion Sri Ramakrishna tested Naren severely. We have already seen how his very presence at Dakshineswar filled the Master with intense joy and delight. Even the sight of him at a distance would move him deeply. Sometimes he would even go into Samâdhi at the mere sight of him. A day came, however, when all this was changed and he began to treat Naren with utter indifference. Narendra came, saluted the Master and sat down before him. He waited for a while but the Master never even spoke. Thinking the Master was, perhaps, absorbed he left the room and coming to Hazra began to chat and smoke with him. Then he heard the Master talking with others and went back to be met with worse treatment, for the Master not only failed to greet him but turned his face away from him towards the wall. When Narendra Nath left for Calcutta there was no change in the Master's indifferent attitude.

A week later, Naren came to Dakshineswar again to find the Master's manner towards him unchanged. He spent the day talking with Hazra and the other devotees and returned home at nightfall. The third and the fourth time it was the same but Narendra Nath kept coming to Dakshineswar, and showed no resentment. Between these visits the Master would sometimes send to Calcutta to enquire about Naren's health, but without changing his demeanour in Naren's presence. At the end of a month, during which time there was no reaction from Naren, the Master said to him, "Though I do not exchange a single word with you, you still continue to come! How is that?" Narendra Nath replied, "Do you think that I come here only to listen to you? I love you and want to see you. This is why I come to Dakshineswar." Sri Ramakrishna was highly pleased at the reply and said, "I was only testing you to see if you would stay away when I did not show you love and attention. Only one of your calibre could put up with so much neglect and indifference. Any one else would have left me long ago, never to come back again."

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna called him to the Panchavati and said, "Through the practice of severe spiritual discipline I have acquired supernatural powers. But of what use are they to me? I cannot even keep my body properly covered. Therefore, with the Mother's permission I am thinking of transmitting them to you. She has made known to me that you will have to do much work for Her. If I impart these powers to you, you can use them when necessary. What do you say?" Narendra knew that the Master possessed powers. After a moment's thought he said, "Will these help me to realise God?" "No," replied the Master, "they will not help you to do that, but they will be very helpful to you when, after realising God you will be engaged in doing His work." Naren said, "I do not want them. Let me realise God first; may be then I shall know whether I want them or not. If I accept them now, I may forget my ideal and in making use of them for some selfish purpose come to grief." We do not know whether Sri Ramakrishna really wanted to impart his powers to Naren or whether he was simply testing him. But we do know that he was much pleased when Naren refused them.

It is impossible to give the reader a complete idea of the relationship between them; of the love and liberty which Naren enjoyed in the company of the Master. Sri Ramakrishna confided the innermost secrets of his heart to Naren. He helped him to develop independence of thought, thus increasing a thousandfold Naren's self-reliance, regard for truth and innate spirituality. The Master's love for and faith in Naren acted as a great restraint upon the freedom-loving young disciple and proved an unconscious protection from temptations.

VIII

THE MAN IN THE MAKING

The weaving of the web of a great personality is a wonderful and unique process. The days are the weavers and every experience a thread; intellect and heart with their variations are the warp and woof; and of these elements is made up the pattern by the awakening soul. The spiritual stature of the individual, with his realisations of the Truth, however, depends entirely on his awareness that his real nature is spiritual; with that must go an entire willingness to renounce the whole world if need be to uncover that nature. No less clearly does the old mandate of renunciation ring as it issues from the mouth of the sage who walked the hills of Judea: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" than when it was sounded centuries before by those other sages in ancient India: "All this is Mâyâ, the unreal. That alone is worth while which is real."

A survey of Naren's youth shows three main factors operating on and moulding his character: His innate spiritual tendency, or, to continue the argument of above, his awareness of his real nature; the influence of his family and of his studies; and lastly, the guidance of his great spiritual teacher Sri Ramakrishna, who raised him from the quagmire of unhappiness and scepticism into certainty and Peace. In the foregoing pages we have given an idea of his innate spiritual qualities as induced by his intense purity, his thirst to know God, his quest for one who had seen Him and his final surrender at the feet of the Master at Dakshineswar.

The influence of his family was exerted mainly through his parents and was profound and far-reaching in its effects. It was his mother who imbued him with the ideas of feeling nobly, thinking highly and acting rightly, and gave him his wide knowledge of the great Hindu Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which he gained at her knee as she read them aloud to him in the twilight. To his father he owed his broadmindedness, manliness and respect for and rightful pride in national traditions. Viswanath Datta, however, could not escape the influence of Western culture which was acting on the India of his time and as a result he like others had lost faith in the sacred writings of his own land. That was the penalty he had to pay for being sufficiently open-minded to keep in touch with the atheistic and epicurean intellectual movement of his day. But all this served through his influence on Naren the purpose of widening the scope of his learning by directing his attention to the culture of other lands. This was as it should be, for, as Swami Vivekananda, his outlook had to be broad enough to include all cultures, all religions, and that with sympathy and understanding, and Naren himself was desirous of encompassing all knowledge, Eastern or Western, philosophical, artistic, and scientific, more specially, Western philosophy.

Forthwith, he threw himself into the study of Western philosophy, science, history and art with his usual intensity, determined to discover and master their underlying purport. He was cognisant already of the fact that most philosophical systems are only intellectual diagrams, giving no place to the emotions of man, thereby stifling his creative and responsive faculties. After all, it requires as great an act of faith to believe in a speculative system of thought as to "believe without understanding" in theological dogmas. Naren did not want diagrams of Truth, no matter how clever. He wanted the Truth. True philosophy should be the mother of spiritual action, the fountain-head of creative energy, the highest and noblest stimulus to the will. Stopping short of that, it is worthless.

The abstruse philosophy of Herbert Spencer interested him particularly and later on he used the Spencerian mode of reasoning in his argumentations on the more abstruse doctrines of the Upanishads and the Vedânta,—much as Lafcadio Hearn, in a less spiritual way, did with the Buddhism of Japan. Herein Naren gained that power of thought, penetrating discrimination and spirit of search for a scientific basis, which stood him in good stead in delivering his message in later years. The philosophy of Spencer is dangerous to the traditional theological conception of the origin of and outlook on things. It pulverizes the very foundations of belief itself; only the strength of an innate idealism, the power of the poetic and imaginative temperament, can save any part of the old personality. It will be seen that it was his inherent capacities for the broader vision that saved young Naren from becoming a hopeless fatalist and atheist. In him was latent the mystic-that-was-to-be, and his spirited soul could not stop its questionings at the agnostic's half-way house. He also studied the systems of the German philosophers, particularly Kant and Schopenhauer, as well as of John Stuart Mill and August Comte and delved into the mystical and analytical speculations of the ancient Aristotelian school. For a time he found refuge and solace in the Positivist philosophy of Comte which embraces a wide ethical outlook. But never did his enthusiasm for the truth interfere with his subjecting any newer and greater revelation before accepting it, to the same keen-eyed scrutiny he had given his earlier beliefs, and comparing it to the systems of his own land.

He now was in full rebellion against the Hindu social system; his eyes were opened to the bondage in which the whole nation was to the autocracy of the priestly caste. The network of caste and creed became to him intolerable. With most persons, particularly those of a romantic temperament, this is a critical state, for there is the danger of dulling the moral sense. When the gods and religious duties, and ascetic and spiritual ideals go, what power is left to curb the turbulent senses? Truly was this a tempestuous period for Naren involving his whole personality; and wonderful was the strength of his inner self which bore him through. His mind was carried by its own impetus beyond the dark and questionable realm of the senses into the world of pure intellectuality, by his subconscious determination to find a way out of the network of ignorance to the reality of his own nature, if such reality there were,—to find a way to God, if God existed. To him the solution of this problem was the imperative need. To a mind of his mould agnosticism was only a mood. The mystical temperament cannot stop at "I do not know." The problem of life, the quest for Truth is for such a one irresistible. His mind is swept by currents peculiar to itself, which, if he is fortunate, carry him past the dangers of doubts and agnosticism into the safety of realisation. Naren was lost in a maze of agnosticism, but he did not lose heart. If philosophy could not help him, if it was not the door-way to vision, he felt it would have to be discarded as an abstraction, which, beautiful though it might be, was not worth while.

Empirical science cannot transcend the realm of the intellect and senses and therefore cannot enable the aspirant to realise that Permanent Reality which is the foundation and cause of all phenomena. Naren was in accord with Western science and philosophy in their dictum that all that man really knows of the world is nothing but the reaction in time and space of his own senses on outside objects; that this external world in itself is for ever unknown and unknowable. This is also true of the internal nature of man. He can never truly know his inner reality, because it is beyond the laws of time and space. Narendra Nath was aware that the sense-organs, mind and intellect are incapable of solving the ultimate riddle of the universe, because even the sense-perceptions on which man bases his various speculations and theories regarding the ultimate mystery of the universe about him are themselves not free from error and are hence unreliable. Western savants have totally failed to establish the existence of the Self apart from physical consciousness and consequently have failed to come to a final conclusion regarding the ultimate Truth.

Nevertheless Narendra had a great respect for Western material science and its analytical processes. He used them to test Sri Ramakrishna's various supernatural experiences and accepted only those which stood the test. Though he was literally pining for Truth, yet he would not accept anything through fear or because of outside pressure. He was even willing to become an honest atheist if that was to be the end of all reasoning; so eager was he to solve the mystery of the universe that he was willing to surrender all the pleasures of the world, nay even life itself for a vision of the Truth. With this idea always in mind, he pursued his studies of Western science and philosophy, accepting whatever was good in them. He did not serve learning in order to make it useful in the acquisition of material power; he ascended the stairs of thought because he desired to realise Truth, spiritual and divine. In his rebellion against his inherited faith he was forced to much wandering and intellectual struggle only to return to it to attain the Truth in his final illumination.

His researches were not confined to philosophy. In connection with his other studies he took a course in Western medicine in order to acquaint himself with the workings of the nervous system—the brain and spinal cord. He had a passion for history, the story of the conditions under which human character and human events were developed. History was, to him, the record of the heart-throbbings of the centuries telling of the aspirations and the realisations of nations.

Poetry, because it is the language of ideals, made a strong appeal to Naren. Wordsworth was to him the fixed star of the poetic firmament. Naren lived in the world of ideals, where history and philosophy and poetry and all the sciences are recognised as phases of Reality. He possessed a prophetic vision of learning, wherein thought was seen as subservient to the real purpose of life, the intellect being the fuel on which the soul fed and which it burned in its supreme effort to go ultimately beyond the intellect, beyond all thought.

With all his seriousness there was another side to Naren. He had a great love for pleasure and gave himself up to it whole-heartedly. Thoroughly human and interested in the ways of human life, he was known in college as "a good old soul," because of his stories, wit and merry-making. He was the leader in all innocent fun and no party was considered complete without him. But his amusements were never allowed to interfere with his studies. Often, after spending the day with friends, he would plunge late at night into the study of some complex historical or philosophical treatise, not giving over until he had completely mastered it. His brain was always clear, even when his health was impaired and he was physically weak. This is to be marvelled at when one considers the terrible strain to which he frequently subjected it. In the last days of his life he used to say, "Though my body is worn out, my brain is as clear as ever." Naren's was a strange personality made up of varying moods and qualities. In mischievous fun a boy, in song an artist, in intellectual pursuits a scholar and in his outlook on life a philosopher.

Naren had learned to do whatever was to be done because the mind sees and understands the fitness of the doing, and not because of some external pressure. The freedom of the will, he was convinced, was the basis of all true self-development,—but that freedom of will must be added to and supported by a righteous and developed discrimination. Then one obeyed the moral laws as a master, not as a slave. He possessed that rare and wonderful qualification for the attainment of the spiritual consciousness,—a positive passion for good. Though his mind plunged into the depth of agnosticism, he hated a materialistic and sensuous outlook on life. He did not make a little learning an excuse for much sinning.

The monastic instinct was natural to him and yet he was a jubilant lover of life. He had the physical freedom of a child with the intellectual strength of a spiritual giant. It is not strange, therefore, to find him rising from his study, when he was preparing for the B. L. Examination and saying to a friend, "Yes, I must abandon the idea of appearing for the examination. What does it all mean! I must be free!" In early youth he recognised marriage to be a barrier to spirituality and said to this same friend, "You are married. You are under the bondage of the householder's life. I am free. Mine will be the monastic life, I am sure." He knew life to be a dream. His very agnosticism had impressed him with the meaninglessness of all things. Therefore he looked upon the monastic life as the only method of protest against the falseness of it all.

The great barrier to his final realisation at this period was the intellect. But it had to be silenced, not by stunting its growth by the acceptance of any casual belief, not by suppressing it as one would an evil thought or desire,—but by developing it to its highest capacity. It must have dealt successfully with all phases of doubt and of uncertainty and gone beyond to the perception of reality, before being capable of joining the emotions in the living of the spiritual life. How Naren arrived at this consummation is a mystery. How his intellect became illuminated, no one knows. It was perhaps due to his contact with his teacher Sri Ramakrishna, whose realisation was the fulfilment and solution of all intellectual cravings and doubts. For do not the scriptures say that when one knows God he knows the Universe? Nature cannot withhold from such a one any of her secrets. But Naren had still to grope in darkness for some time to come. There were many difficulties to be faced, many doubts to be settled before he could resign himself to a teacher and accept his teachings without question, and he was to fight every inch of the way, accepting nothing until it was proved conclusively. When any point was gained it became insight, illumination. In all his struggles and sufferings of mind and heart he instinctively felt that victory was to be his: that the latent monastic self would some day overcome his agnostic mind and make of him the victorious monk. He was pure in heart, and such, Jesus the Christ said, shall see God.

To gain a still clearer perspective of Naren's personality and the early stage of his mental development, it would be well to quote the observations of one of his fellow-students, Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, Seal, who was one of the leading intellects of India. He says in an article written for the *Prabuddha Bhârata* in 1907:

"When I first met Vivekananda in 1881 we were fellow-students of Principal William Hastie, scholar, metaphysician, and poet, at the General Assembly's College. He was my senior in age, though I was his senior in the College by one year. Undeniably a gifted youth, sociable, free and unconventional in manners, a sweet singer, the soul of social circles, a brilliant conversationalist, somewhat bitter and caustic, piercing with the shafts of a keen wit the shows and mummeries of the world, sitting in the scorner's chair but hiding the tenderest of hearts under that garb of cynicism; altogether an inspired Bohemian but possessing what Bohemians lack, an iron will; somewhat peremptory and absolute, speaking with accents of authority and withal possessing a strange power of the eye which could hold his listeners in thrall.

"This was patent to all. But what was known to few was the inner man and his struggles,—the *stürm und drang* of soul which expressed itself in his restless and Bohemian wanderings.

"This was the beginning of a critical period in his mental history, during which he awoke to self-consciousness, and laid the foundations of his future personality. John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* had upset his first boyish theism and easy optimism which he had imbibed from the outer circles of the Brahmo Samaj. The arguments from causality and design were for him broken reeds to lean upon, and he was haunted by the problem of the Evil in Nature and Man which he, by no means, could reconcile with the goodness of an All-wise and All-powerful Creator. A friend introduced him to the study of Hume's Scepticism and Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the Unknowable, and his unbelief gradually assumed the form of a settled philosophical scepticism.

"His first emotional freshness and *naïveté* were worn out. A certain dryness and incapacity for the old prayerful devotions, an *ennui* which he concealed under a *nonchalant* air of habitual mocking and scoffing, troubled his spirit. But music still stirred him as nothing else could, and gave him a weird unearthly sense of unseen realities which brought tears to his eyes.

"It was at this time that he came to me being brought by a common friend, the same who had introduced him to the study of Hume and Herbert Spencer. I had had a nodding acquaintance with him before, but now he opened himself to me and spoke of his harassing doubts and his despair of reaching certitude about the Ultimate Reality. He asked for a course of Theistic philosophic reading suited to a beginner in his situation. I named some authorities, but the stock arguments of the Intuitionists and the Scotch common sense school only confirmed him in his unbelief. Besides, he did not appear to me to have sufficient patience for humdrum reading,—his faculty was to imbibe not so much from books as from living communion and personal experience. With him it was life kindling life and thought kindling thought.

"I felt deeply drawn towards him, for I now knew that he would grapple with difficulties in earnest.

"I gave him a course of readings in Shelley. Shelley's Hymn to the spirit of Intellectual Beauty, his pantheism of impersonal love and his vision of a glorified millennial humanity moved him as the arguments of the philosophers had failed to move him. The universe was no longer a mere lifeless, loveless mechanism. It contained a spiritual principle of unity.

"I spoke to him now of a higher unity than Shelley had conceived, the unity of the Para Brahman as the Universal Reason. My own position at that time sought to fuse into one, three essential elements, the pure monism of the Vedanta, the dialectics of the Absolute idea of Hegel and the Gospel of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity of the French Revolution. The principle of individuation was with me the principle of Evil. The Universal Reason was all in all, Nature, life, history being the progressive unfolding of the Absolute idea. All ethical, social and political creeds and principles were to be tested by their conformity to Pure Reason. The element of feeling appeared to me merely pathological, a disturbance of sanity and order. How to overcome the resistance of matter, of individuality and of unreason, to the manifestation of the Pure Reason was the great problem of life and society, of education and legislation. I also held with the ardour of a young inexperienced visionary that the deliverance of the race from the bondage of unreason would come about through a new revolutionary polity of which the watchwords were Equality, Liberty and Fraternity.

"The sovereignty of Universal Reason, and the negation of the individual as the principle of morals, were ideas that soon came to satisfy Vivekananda's intellect and gave him an assured conquest over scepticism and materialism. What was more, they furnished him with the card and compass of life, as it were. But this brought him no peace. The conflict now entered deeper into his soul, for the creed of Universal Reason called on him to suppress the yearnings and susceptibilities of his artist nature and

Bohemian temperament. His senses were keen and acute, his natural cravings and passions strong and imperious, his youthful susceptibilities tender, his conviviality free and merry. To suppress these was to kill his natural spontaneity,—almost to suppress his self. The struggle soon took a seriously ethical turn, —reason struggling for mastery with passion and sense. The fascinations of the sense and the cravings of a youthful nature now appeared to him as impure, as gross and carnal. This was the hour of darkest trial for him. His musical gifts brought him associates for whose manners and morals he had bitter and undisguised contempt. But his convivial temperament proved too strong for him. It was, therefore, some relief to him when I occasionally kept him company of an evening when he went out for a musical *soirée*.

"I saw and recognised in him a high, ardent and pure nature vibrant and resonant with impassioned sensibilities. He was certainly no sour or cross-grained puritan, no normal hypochondriac;—he would indulge cynically in unconventional language except when he would spare my innocence. He took an almost morbid delight in shocking conventionality in its tabernacles, respectability in its booths; and in the pursuit of his sport would appear other than he was, puzzling and mystifying those outside his inner circle of friends. But in the recesses of his soul he wrestled with the fierce and fell spirit of Desire, the subtle and illusive spirit of Fancy.

"To his repeated quest for some power which would deliver him from bondage and unavailing struggle, I could only point to the sovereignty of Pure Reason and the ineffable peace that comes of identifying the self with the Reason in the Universe. Those were for me days of a victorious Platonic transcendentalism. The experience of a refractory flesh or rebellious temperament had not come to me. I had not sufficient patience for the mood or attitude of mind which surrenders the sovereign right of self-government to artificial props or outside help, such as grace or mediation. I felt no need of conciliating feeling and nature in the cult of Reason, nor had had any experience of a will divided in its allegiance to the Self. The experience of a discord between the Ideal and the Real, between Nature and Spirit, had indeed come to me already in an objective way as an outstanding reality and was to come afterwards in subjective fashion though in forms quite other than what obtained in Vivekananda's case. But at the time, his problems were not mine, nor were my difficulties his.

"He confessed that though his intellect was conquered by the universal, his heart owned the allegiance of the individual Ego and complained that a pale, bloodless reason, sovereign *de jure* but not *de facto,* could not hold out arms to save him in the hour of temptation. He wanted to know if my philosophy could satisfy his senses, could mediate bodily, as it were, for the soul's deliverance; in short, he wanted a flesh and blood reality visible in form and glory; above all he cried out for a hand to save, to uplift, to protect, a *sakti* or power outside himself which could cure him of his impotence and cover his nothingness with glory,—a *guru* or master who by embodying perfection in the flesh would still the commotion in his soul.

"At the time, this appeared to me a weakness born of unreason, this demand for perfection in the flesh and for a power out of ourselves to save,—this sacrifice of reason to sense. My young inexperienced self, confronted with this demand of a soul striving with itself, knew not wherewith to satisfy it, and

Vivekananda soon after betook himself to the ministers and missionaries of the Brahmo Samaj, asking Brahmos with an unconscious Socratic Irony for an ideal made real to sense, for truth made visible, for a power unto deliverance. Here he had enough, he bitterly complained, of moral disquisitions, principles, intuitions for pabulum which to him appeared tasteless and insipid. He tried diverse teachers, creeds and cults, and it was this quest that brought him, though at first in a doubting spirit, to the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar, who spoke to him with an authority as none had spoken before, and by his *sakti* brought peace into his soul and healed the wounds of his spirit. But his rebellious intellect scarcely yet owned the Master. His mind misgave him and he doubted if the peace which would possess his soul in the presence of the Master was not illusory. It was only gradually that the doubts of that keen intellect were vanquished by the calm assurance that belongs to ocular demonstration.

"I watched with intense interest the transformation that went on under my eyes. The attitude of a young and rampant Vedantist—*cum*-Hegelian-*cum*-Revolutionary like myself towards the cult of religious ecstasy and Kali-worship, may be easily imagined; and the spectacle of a born iconoclast and freethinker like Vivekananda, a creative and dominating intelligence, a tamer of souls, himself caught in the meshes of what appeared to me an uncouth, supernatural mysticism, was a riddle which my philosophy of the Pure Reason could scarcely read at the time. But Vivekananda, 'the loved and lost' was loved, and mourned most in what I could not but then regard as his defection; and it was personal feeling, after all, the hated pathological element of individual preference and individual relationship, which most impelled me, when at last I went on what to a home-keeping recluse like myself was an adventurous journey to Dakshineswar, to see and hear Vivekananda's Master, and spent the greater part of a long summer day in the shady and peaceful solitudes of the Temple-garden, returning as the sun set amidst the whirl and rush and roar and the awful gloom of a blinding thunder-storm, with a sense of bewilderment as well moral as physical, and a lurking perception of the truth that the majesty of Law orders the apparently irregular and grotesque, that there may be self-mastery in apparent self-alienation, that sense even in its errors is only incipient Reason and that faith in a Saving Power *ab extra* is but the dim reflex of an original act of self-determination. And a significant confirmation of all this came in the subsequent life-history of Vivekananda who, after he had found the firm assurance he sought in the saving Grace and Power of his Master, went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man, and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the Self."

Naren yearned sincerely for knowledge, sure, real, permanent and satisfactory. He wanted to get out of the quagmire of doubt and uncertainty. To him the voice of the spirit of agnosticism was the voice of anguish, causing him much mental tribulation and stress of soul. A feeling of emptiness and sadness obsessed him. Why he could not explain. He entered that world in which every glance and every step is suffering, because it is the world of doubt in which man says, "I do not know." The ordinary philosopher utters this with indifference; the saint-that-is-to-be says it with a suffering-laden heart. The worldly man pays no heed if the whole world of idealism and tradition falls; he is oblivious to the suffering which disillusion involves. Yet in all this confusion of intellect and agnosticism Naren practised meditation. He continued his spiritual exercises. It gave him great mental peace, this effort to quiet the mind in meditation. And in that state when great silence and great stillness came, he would sometimes pass into the innermost recesses of his nature. There the doubting mind could not follow. During this period the visions he had during the first few visits to Dakshineswar helped him a great deal to keep his mind firm in the belief of an ultimate Reality. Sri Ramakrishna's words were of great comfort and helped to keep him steady in the practice of meditation, no matter what the tumult of his mind. "God listens to the sincere prayer of the human mind. I can swear that you can see Him more intensely than you see me. You can talk to Him more intimately than you talk to me. One can hear His words and feel His touch." Again: "You may not believe in various divine forms and may discard them as products of the human imagination. But if you believe in some ultimate Reality which is the regulator of the universe, you can pray thus: 'O God, I do not know Thee. Be gracious to reveal to me Thy real nature!'—He must listen to you if your prayer be sincere." These words of the Master encouraged Naren a great deal and helped to turn his mind more and more to the practice of spiritual exercises. He had been greatly impressed with the opinion of Hamilton that the human intellect can only give hints of the truth that there exists a God who is the regulator of the universe. It is beyond the power of intellect to give a correct knowledge of God. Here philosophy ends and religion begins. Naren often would quote this. Though he was now giving much time and energy to spiritual exercises, he did not throw away his philosophical books. As a matter of fact, study, music and meditation wholly occupied his mind.

Naren took to a new method of meditation. Formerly he used to meditate upon God, following the Brâhmo belief, as formless but endowed with attributes. But now he prayed from the bottom of his heart, "O God, be gracious and reveal to me Thy real nature which is the embodiment of Truth!" Then he would banish from his mind all other thoughts. After a while his mind would dive so deeply into the innermost recesses of his soul that he would lose all consciousness of body and time. He would meditate in this manner at night when all the inmates of the house had retired. He would feel then an ineffable peace within; afterwards he would feel for some time a sort of intoxication which made it difficult for him to leave his seat. On one such occasion as he was thus seated after meditation, he was blessed with the vision of Lord Buddha.

Time passed on and the days became landmarks of varied higher experiences. The man is seen in the making, inflexible with himself in his search for Reality. All the passionate longing which, in ordinary persons, is related to the senses, was in Naren directed to the understanding of life and its problems. Where there is such sincerity of effort there must come realisation. The result of all his deep study in the wisdom of man only brought him to the conclusion that all worldly knowledge and experience is vanity and vexation of spirit. Slowly but surely came the expansion of thought. Gradually Naren became convinced, by an intellectual process, of the existence of an Ultimate Reality, conscious and inexpressible, from which all phenomena have emanated. The gods might be false, thought Naren, but not God.

But it must be remembered that there were other factors equally important in Naren's finding of this intellectual, or rather spiritual position, besides his own innate power of discrimination and thought. Naren began to build, though slowly at first, an enlightened spiritual life upon the broad basis of insight under the vigilant watch of an ever-wakeful spiritual guide. It was a long way, however, between the state of agnosticism and the state of prayer. But prayer and contemplation were gradually awakened in Naren, as he began to lead the life of renunciation, the quieting of the senses, and centre the strength and intensity of his thought upon these noble ideals. And was not such concentration of thought, in itself, prayer? There came a longing for divine vision, to make thought a process of feeling. The idea, God, must become the feeling that God *is*. And when one has that feeling, who shall say unto him, "This is true and this is not true"? Intellectual truth is always debatable; spiritual Truth is beyond debate. To feel such a longing, even to dream of such an exalted state of consciousness, verily, in itself, is spirituality. Naren pondered deeply on the idea of God. He would dream day after day of the contents of the infinite consciousness. Meditation became a habit with him. The desire to see, to know the Truth, became so intense that already the walls of his intellect were being undermined and washed away, leaving the way open to the intuitive mind, the direct servant of the soul. At night he often sank the shaft of personality into its very depths. In the dream consciousness he would see dimly things which were beyond all mortal dreaming, or in the morning he would awaken with a feeling of exaltation that could only be explained on the ground that his sleep was not ordinary sleep. The feeling of exaltation, the temporary glimpses of Reality, were daily happenings with him. It was at this time that frequently he seemed to be separate from his body.

He thought when he met the Master, his guide and companion, that he had found a haven of peace and the end of all his struggles, but he was unable to accept the teacher in toto. As the Master tried to kindle the sleeping spirituality of his disciple, the latter asserted his intellectual strength. He opposed and he fretted. But the Master, to use his own expressions, was not a water-snake, but a deadly cobra whose bite was fatal. Gradually Naren's opposition died away in complete surrender. The inner history of Naren's conversion and illumination is too subtle to be described in words. The Guru performed this in an inscrutable manner. Only the outer strife, the intellectual struggle Naren's friends observed and knew. But the real conversion is a mystery, known only to the teacher, and perhaps, the disciple.

IX

TRIALS AND HARDSHIPS

Naren's days now passed in study and meditation. Often he went to Dakshineswar. At his own home he lived in a room all to himself. Viswanath Datta, whose ambition was to see Naren a great legal light, made him an assistant to Nimâi Charan Bose, a well-known attorney-at-law. Viswanath was also desirous of seeing his son marry. On several occasions he had planned for Naren's marriage but for some reason or other arrangements were always broken off. Sri Ramakrishna was greatly opposed to Naren's marriage. He prayed to Mother that it should never take place. He was greatly relieved, when such negotiations fell through, for he held that Naren was not born for the love of any single person, or for the rearing up of a family, but for the saving of souls. Naren's father, however, did secure an alliance with a powerful and wealthy family of Calcutta who were ready to pay a magnificent sum as dowry to Naren's people and send him to England for education. But before the marriage could take place the father passed away. Naren now became his own master. His determination to remain unmarried was inflexible. The ideal of celibacy became a principle with him as his passion for purity became stronger. And when the members of the family would press him to lead the householder's life and repeatedly urged him to marry, he said to them with vehemence, "What, are you going to drown me? Once married, it will be all over with me!"

Naren often spoke about the glory of the monastic life to his friends; they did not understand and tried to induce him to turn his attention to worldly pursuits. "Why not settle down to definite plans, Naren? You have a great career before you if you will only look more towards the prospects which the world holds out," said a friend. Naren met this remark with a shrug and told them that he had often desired to possess a reputation, position and popularity, with wealth and power. But reflection had shown him that death comes and engulfs all! Why should then one build up greatness which can be destroyed by death! "The life of the monk is really great for he seeks to push aside the power of death. He seeks a changeless reality, while the world deals with and falls with the conditions of change." The friends were not convinced. "The trouble is," said one of them, "that Naren has met an old man who goes into trances and lives a monk's life in the grounds of the Kâli-temple at Dakshineswar on the banks of the Ganges. He is always meditating and talking about God and knows nothing about the world. This man is upsetting all of Naren's ambitions and is turning his mind from worldly affairs and ruining his future. The name of this old man is Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Naren, if you have any sense, give up going to see him. It is hampering your studies, and it will ruin your whole future if you continue. You have great talents. You can attain anything if you set your will to it and give up going to Dakshineswar." Naren replied very gravely, "You see, you do not understand. I myself do not understand. No, even I do not understand, but I love that old man, that saint, Sri Ramakrishna."

If Narendra did not go to Dakshineswar for several days, the Master would come to his disciple in Calcutta, when he would give Naren counsel regarding meditation and other spiritual exercises.

He was afraid that Naren, unable to bear the importunities of his parents and relatives, would accept the bondage of married life. He often encouraged him to live the strict life of Brahmacharya and said one day, "A man develops subtle power as a result of strict observance of the vows of celibacy for twelve years. Then he can understand and grasp very subtle things which otherwise elude his intellect. Through that understanding the aspirant can get direct revelation of God. That pure understanding alone enables him to realise Truth."

The ladies of the family concluded that Naren was averse to marriage as a result of his intimacy with Sri Ramakrishna. Referring to this Naren said later, "One day my grandmother overheard my Master speaking in my room, about the efficacy of a celibate life. She told of this to my parents. They became greatly concerned lest I should renounce the world and were increasingly anxious that I should marry. My mother was especially fearful lest I should leave the family to take upon myself the vows of monastic life. She often spoke of the matter to me; but I would give a casual reply. But all their plannings for my marriage were frustrated by the strong will of the Master. On one occasion all negotiations of marriage were settled, when a petty difference of opinion arose and the engagement was broken."

Naren, as we have seen, appeared for his B. A. Examination in 1884. Some days after the examination he suddenly came face to face with the grim reality of the world; his light-heartedness and boyishness of spirit received a rude shock. It was the early part of 1884. The examination result was not yet out. He had gone one evening about two miles from the city of Calcutta to visit a friend at Bârânagore. It was night and there was much talk. Just as the merriment and song were at their height, a messenger came from Naren's home with the news that his father had died suddenly of heart disease. The news overwhelmed Naren. He hastened at once to Calcutta. The mother, the two sisters, and two younger brothers of Naren were waiting and weeping. Naren was dazed. He could neither weep nor speak. According to custom he performed the last rites for his father.

Viswanath's sudden death placed the entire family in a desperate condition, for he was the only earning member and always spent more than he earned. The creditors knocked at the door. Relatives who had been indebted to his father in so many ways now turned into enemies. They even resolved to deprive the family of its living quarters. Though Narendra had no income he was compelled to maintain seven or eight persons. Came days of suffering. From comfort Naren was suddenly thrown into the direst poverty, facing at times even actual starvation. Later he made efforts to forget those terrible days, but in vain. So dark were they, so heavy the clouds of fate. Yet he is the real man who meets fate fearlessly and with power, the captain of his soul. This Naren did. He passed his B. A. Examination and was admitted to the Law class. In college he was the poorest of the poor. Even shoes became a luxury; his garments were of the coarsest cloth, and many times he went to his classes without food. Often he became faint with hunger and weakness. His friends, now and then, invited him to their houses. He would chat happily with them for long hours, but when food was offered, the vision of the desolation at his home would come up in his mind and prevent him from eating. He would leave with the excuse that he had a pressing engagement elsewhere. On reaching home he would eat as little as possible in order that the others might have enough. Since his passing away his mother has told many stories of the sacrifices her son made for her at that time. Often he would refuse to eat on the plea that he had already eaten at the house of a friend, when the fact was, he did not eat at home for fear of depriving others of a full meal. Such was the greatness and such was the fineness of the man! At the same time he tried to be his ordinary boyish, joyous self and to make light of his trials. The Datta family was proud, in a lordly way, and concealed its misery under the cloak of pride. His friends, sons of wealthy families of Calcutta, drove up in magnificent carriages to Naren's home to take him for drives and pleasure trips, never suspecting that his wasting away physically was due to any other cause than an exaggerated grief at the loss of his father.

To make matters worse, a dispute arose with a branch of the family over the very house in which Naren and his mother lived. On some far-fetched basis a case was made out against them and the affair was brought into the courts. The contestants demanded that the house be partitioned, they to receive the larger and better portion. This was a blow to Naren. His mother sank under it. That they were to have their affairs aired in public! The case dragged on and on. During the trial several incidents occurred which revealed the temper, the character and the wit of Naren. Finally the case was decided in favour of Naren's family.

After that, things became easier but by no means comfortable. For several years it was a painful struggle to obtain the coarsest food and clothing. Yet they were happy, when they remembered that the home was theirs and they were together. Naren made every effort to make both ends meet. He became a Freemason, hoping that the social advantages thereby to be gained would also create a financial opportunity for him. He became a teacher in one of Vidyasagar's institutions, but gave that up in a month's time for better opportunities. It was a hand-to-mouth existence. There were moments when Naren despaired, but he was too brave to show what he felt. In other trying times later the memory of these struggles and hardships gave him strength to carry on, for nothing could be worse than the evils through which he had already successfully passed. The relationship between mother and son was deepened a hundredfold through these tempestuous experiences and she was made to recognise through them that in Naren was the trait of character which she especially admired in his father—never, never to acknowledge defeat.

The following is Naren's own description of this darkest period of his life:

"Even before the period of mourning was over I had to knock about in search of a job. Starving and barefooted, I wandered from office to office under the scorching noon-day sun with an application in hand, one or two intimate friends who sympathised with me in my misfortunes accompanying me sometimes. But everywhere the door was slammed in my face. This first contact with the reality of life convinced me that unselfish sympathy was a rarity in the world—there was no place in it for the weak, the poor and the destitute. I noticed that those who only a few days ago would have been proud to help me in any way, now turned their face against me, though they had enough and to spare. Seeing all this, the world sometimes seemed to me to be the handiwork of the devil. One day, weary and footsore, I sat down in the shade of the Ochterlony Monument in the Maidan. Some friends of mine happened to be there, one of whom sang a song about the overflowing grace of God, perhaps to comfort me. It was like a terrible blow on my head. I remembered the helpless condition of my mother and brothers, and exclaimed in bitter anguish and despondency, 'Will you please stop that song? Such fancies may be pleasing to those who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth and have no starving relatives at home. Yes, there was a time when I too thought like that. But today before the hard facts of life, it sounds like grim mockery.'

"My friend must have been wounded. How could he fathom the dire misery that had forced these words out of my mouth? Sometimes when I found that there were not enough provisions for the family and my purse was empty, I would pretend to my mother that I had an invitation to dine out and remain practically without food. Out of self-respect I could not disclose the facts to others. My rich friends sometimes requested me to come to their homes or gardens and sing. I had to comply when I could not avoid it. I did not feel inclined to express my woes before them nor did they try, themselves, to find out my difficulties. A few among them, sometimes, used to ask me, 'Why do you look so pale and weak today?' Only one of them came to know about my poverty without my knowledge, and, now and then, sent anonymous help to my mother by which act of kindness he has put me under a deep debt of gratitude.

"Some of my old friends who earned their livelihood by unfair means, asked me to join them. A few among them who had been compelled to follow this dubious way of life by sudden turns of fortune, as in my case, really felt sympathy for me. There were other troubles also. Various temptations came in my way. A rich woman sent me an ugly proposal to end my days of penury which I sternly rejected with scorn. Another woman also made similar overtures to me. I said to her, 'You have wasted your life seeking the pleasures of the flesh. The dark shadows of death are before you. Have you done anything to face that? Give up all these filthy desires and remember God!'

"In spite of all these troubles, however, I never lost faith in the existence of God nor in His divine mercy. Every morning taking His name I got up and went out in search of a job. One day my mother overheard me and said bitterly, 'Hush, you fool, you are crying yourself hoarse for God from your childhood, and what has He done for you?' I was stung to the quick. Doubt crossed my mind. 'Does God really exist,' I thought, 'and if so, does He really hear the fervent prayer of man? Then why is there no response to my passionate appeals? Why is there so much woe in His benign kingdom? Why does Satan rule in the realm of the Merciful God?' Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's words—'if God is good and gracious, why then do millions of people die for want of a few morsels of food at times of famine?'—rang in my ears with bitter irony. I was exceedingly cross with God. It was also the most opportune moment for doubt to creep into my heart.

"It was ever against my nature to do anything secretly. On the contrary it was a habit with me from my boyhood not to hide even my thoughts from others through fear or anything else. So it was quite natural for me now to proceed to prove before the world that God was a myth, or that, even if He existed, to call upon Him was fruitless. Soon the report gained currency that I was an atheist and did not scruple to drink or even frequent houses of ill fame. This unmerited calumny hardened my heart still more. I openly declared that in this miserable world there was nothing reprehensible in a man who, seeking for a brief respite, would resort to anything. Not only that, but if I was once convinced of the efficacy of such a course I would not, through fear of anybody, shrink from following it.

"A garbled report of the matter soon reached the ears of the Master and his devotees in Calcutta. Some of these came to me to have a first-hand knowledge of the situation and hinted to me that they believed in some of the rumours at least. A sense of wounded pride filled my heart on finding that they could think me so low. In an exasperated mood I gave them to understand plainly that it was cowardice to believe in God through fear of hell and argued with them as to His existence or non-existence, quoting several Western philosophers in support. The result was that they took leave of me with the conviction that I was hopelessly lost,—and I was glad. I thought that perhaps Sri Ramakrishna also would believe that, and this thought filled me with uncontrollable pique. 'Never mind,' I said to myself, 'if the good or bad opinion of a man rests upon such flimsy foundations, I don't care.' But I was amazed to hear later that the Master had, at first, received the report coldly, without expressing an opinion one way or the other. And when one of his favourite disciples, Bhavanâth, said to him with tears in his eyes, 'Sir, I could not even dream that Narendra could stoop so low,'—he was furious and said, 'Hush, you fool! The Mother has told me that it can never be so. I shan't be able to look at you if you speak to me again like that.'

"But notwithstanding these forced atheistic views, the vivid memory of the divine visions I had experienced since my boyhood, and especially after my contact with Sri Ramakrishna, would lead me to think that God must exist and that there must be some way to realise Him. Otherwise life would be meaningless. In the midst of all troubles and tribulations I must find that way. Days passed, and the mind continued to waver between doubt and certainty. My pecuniary wants also remained just the same.

"The summer was over, and the rains set in. The search for a job still went on. One evening, after a whole day's fast and exposure to rain I was returning home with tired limbs and a jaded mind; overpowered with exhaustion and unable to move a step forward, I sank down on the outer plinth of a house on the roadside. I can't say whether I was insensible for a time or not. Various thoughts crowded in on my mind, and I was too weak to drive them off and fix my attention on a particular thing. Suddenly I felt as if by some divine power the coverings of my soul were removed one after another. All my former doubts regarding the co-existence of divine justice and mercy, and the presence of misery in the creation of a Blissful Providence, were automatically solved. By a deep introspection I found the meaning of it all and was satisfied. As I proceeded homewards I found there was no trace of fatigue in the body and the mind was refreshed with wonderful strength and peace. The night was well-nigh over.

"Henceforth I became deaf to the praise and blame of worldly people. I was convinced that I was not born like humdrum people to earn money and maintain my family, much less to strive for sense-pleasures. I began secretly to prepare myself to renounce the world like my grandfather. I fixed a day for the purpose and was glad to hear that the Master was to come to Calcutta that very day. 'It is lucky,' I thought, 'I shall leave the world with the blessings of my Guru.' As soon as I met the Master, he pressed me hard to spend that night with him at Dakshineswar. I made various excuses, but to no purpose. I had to accompany him. There was not much talk in the carriage. Reaching Dakshineswar I was seated for some time in his room along with others, when he went into a trance. Presently he drew near me and touching me with great tenderness, began to sing a song, with tears in his eyes. I had repressed my feelings so long, but now they overflowed in tears. The meaning of the song was too apparent—he knew of my intentions. The audience marvelled at this exchange of feeling between us. When the Master regained his normal mood, some of them asked him the reason of it and he replied with a smile, 'Oh, it was something between him and me.' Then at night he dismissed the others and calling me to his side said, 'I know you have come for the Mother's work, and won't be able to remain in the world. But for my sake, stay as long as I live.' Saying this he burst into tears again. The next day with his permission I returned home. A thousand thoughts about the maintenance of the family assailed me. I began to look about again for a living. By working in an attorney's office and translating a few books, I got just enough means to live from hand to mouth, but it was not permanent, and there was no fixed income to maintain my mother and brothers.

"One day the idea struck me that God listened to Sri Ramakrishna's prayers; so why should I not ask him to pray for me for the removal of my pecuniary wants,—a favour the Master would never deny me? I hurried to Dakshineswar and insisted on his making the appeal on behalf of my starving family. He said, 'My boy, I can't make such demands. But why don't you go and ask the Mother yourself? All your sufferings are due to your disregard of Her.' I said, 'I do not know the Mother, you please speak to Her on my behalf. You must.' He replied tenderly, 'My dear boy, I have done so again and again. But you do not accept Her, so She does not grant my prayer. All right, it is Tuesday—go to the Kâli-temple to-night, prostrate yourself before the Mother and ask Her any boon you like. It shall be granted. She is Knowledge Absolute, the Inscrutable Power of Brahman, and by Her mere will has given birth to this world. Everything is in Her power to give.' I believed every word and eagerly waited for the night. About 9 o'clock the Master commanded me to go to the temple. As I went I was filled with a divine intoxication. My feet were unsteady. My heart was leaping in anticipation of the joy of beholding the living Goddess and hearing Her words. I was full of the idea. Reaching the temple, as I cast my eyes upon the image, I actually found that the Divine Mother was living and conscious, the Perennial Fountain of Divine Love and Beauty. I was caught in a surging wave of devotion and love. In an ecstasy of joy I prostrated myself again and again before the Mother and prayed, 'Mother, give me discrimination! Give me renunciation! Give unto me knowledge and devotion! Grant that I may have an uninterrupted vision of Thee!' A serene peace reigned in my soul. The world was forgotten. Only the Divine Mother shone within my heart.

"As soon as I returned Sri Ramakrishna asked me if I had prayed to the Mother for the removal of my worldly wants. I was startled at this question and said, 'No, sir, I forgot all about it. But is there any remedy now?' 'Go again,' said he, 'and tell Her about your wants.' I again set out for the temple, but at the sight of the Mother again forgot my mission, bowed to Her repeatedly and prayed only for love and devotion. The Master asked me if I had done it the second time. I told him what had happened. He said, 'How thoughtless! Couldn't you restrain yourself enough to say those few words? Well, try once more and make that prayer to Her. Quick!' I went for the third time, but on entering the temple a terrible shame overpowered me. I thought, 'What a trifle I have come to pray to the Mother about! It is like asking a gracious king for a few vegetables! What a fool I am!' In shame and remorse I bowed to Her respectfully and said, 'Mother, I want nothing but knowledge and devotion.' Coming out of the temple I understood that all this was due to Sri Ramakrishna's will. Otherwise how could I fail in my object no less than thrice? I came to him and said, 'Sir, it is you who have cast a charm over my mind and made me forgetful. Now please grant me the boon that my people at home may no longer suffer the pinch of poverty.' He said, 'Such a prayer never comes from my lips. I asked you to pray for yourself. But you couldn't do it. It appears that you are not destined to enjoy worldly happiness. Well, I can't help it.' But I wouldn't let him go. I insisted on his granting that prayer. At last he said, 'All right, your people at home will never be in want of plain food and clothing.'"

The above incident is, no doubt, a landmark in Naren's life. Hitherto he had not realised the significance of the Motherhood of God. He had nothing but unfeigned contempt for image-worship. From now on the full meaning and purpose of the worship of God through images was brought home to him, thus making his spiritual life richer and fuller.

Sri Ramakrishna was delighted beyond measure at this transformation. The following account of Vaikuntha Nath Sanyal, another devotee of the Master, who visited Dakshineswar the next day, will bear this out:

"Coming to Dakshineswar at noon I found the Master alone in his room and Narendra sleeping outside. Sri Ramakrishna was in a joyous mood, and as soon as I saluted him he said, pointing to Narendra, 'Look here, that boy is exceptionally good. His name is Narendra. He would not accept the Divine Mother before, but did so yesterday. He is in straitened circumstances nowadays. So I advised him to pray to the Mother for riches, but he couldn't. He said he was put to shame. Returning from the temple he asked me to teach him a song to the Mother, which I did. The whole of the last night he sang that song. So he is sleeping now.' Then with an unfeigned delight he said, Isn't it wonderful that Narendra has accepted Mother?' I said, 'Yes.' After a brief pause he repeated the question, and thus it went on for some time.

"At about 4 o'clock Narendra came to Sri Ramakrishna before leaving for Calcutta. But no sooner had the Master seen him than he came closer and closer to him and sitting almost on his lap said, pointing first to himself and then to Narendra, 'Well, I see I am this and again that. Really I feel no difference—as a stick floating on the Ganges seems to divide the water, which in reality is one. Do you see my point? Well, what exists after all but Mother? What do you say?' After talking a few minutes like this, he wished to smoke. I prepared tobacco and gave him the Hookah. After one or two puffs at it he said he would smoke from the Chillum (pipe). Then he offered it to Naren saying, 'Pull at it through my hands.' Naren of course hesitated. How could he defile the hands of his Guru by touching them with his lips? But Sri Ramakrishna said, 'What foolish ideas you have! Am I different from you? This is myself and that too is myself.' He again put forth his hands towards the lips of Narendra, who had no alternative but to comply with his request. Narendra took two or three puffs. Sri Ramakrishna was about to smoke when Narendra hurriedly interfered saying, 'Please wash your hands first, sir.' But his protest was in vain. 'What silly ideas of differentiation you have!' the Master said and smoked without washing his hands, talking all the while in an exalted mood. I was surprised to see Sri Ramakrishna, who could not take any food part of which had already been offered to somebody else, making this remarkable exception in the case of Narendra Nath. It gave me an idea of his love and kinship to Narendra. When, at about 8 o'clock, he was in his normal mood again, Narendra and myself took leave of him and walked to Calcutta."

Afterwards Narendra often said: "Sri Ramakrishna was the only person who, ever since he had met me, believed in me uniformly throughout—even my mother and brothers did not do so. It was his unflinching trust and love for me that bound me to him for ever. He alone knew how to love another. Worldly people only make a show of love for selfish ends."

X

DAYS OF ECSTASY AT DAKSHINESWAR

Indeed to be with Sri Ramakrishna was, in itself, a Tapasyâ and a Sâdhanâ. It was, in itself, a rising beyond all bodily ideas and limitations of the senses. It required concentration and strength of character of the highest order to follow the Master in his flights of thought. It stirred the whole soul of the devotee to realisation and ecstatic fervour to enter the field of divine emotion which Sri Ramakrishna tried to depict in words and in which he soared, beyond all words, to God. The company of Sri Ramakrishna was, in itself, a most compelling stimulus to spirituality. Emotion literally blazed there. There the soul of things literally shone forth.

Only those who have sat at the feet of the Master can know the ocean of sweet intimacy and oneness with Sri Ramakrishna in which the disciples were bathed. It was a tender, natural, human and easy relationship, free from any affectation and the repelling spirit of egoism and aloofness which so often characterises the atmosphere which surrounds the Guru. The spirit was, indeed, divine; the presence of God was always felt; and yet there was much laughter and fun beneath the spreading trees of Dakshineswar and in the Master's room. The Master and the disciples would often sit under the boughs of the trees talking intimately and sweetly. And every now and then some spiritual remarks of the Master would change the human joy into divine blessedness.

Referring to those days Naren used to say, "It is impossible to give others even an idea of the ineffable joy we derived from the presence of the Master. It is really beyond our understanding how he would give us training, though unconsciously on our part, through fun and play, and thus mould our spiritual life. As the master-athlete proceeds with great caution and restraint with the beginner now overpowering him in the struggle with great difficulty, as it were, again owning defeat at his hands to strengthen his spirit of self-reliance, in exactly the same manner did Sri Ramakrishna treat us. Realising that in all exists the Atman which is the source of infinite strength, in every individual, pigmy though he might be, he was able to see the potential giant. He could clearly discern the latent spiritual power which would in the fulness of time manifest itself. Holding that bright picture before us he would speak highly of us and encourage us. Again he would warn us lest we should frustrate this future consummation by becoming entangled in worldly desires, and further he would keep us under control by carefully observing even the minute details of our life. All this was done silently and unobtrusively. That was the great secret of his training of the disciples and moulding of their lives. Once I felt that I could not practise deeper concentration in meditation. I told him of it and sought his advice and direction. He told me his personal experiences in the matter and gave me instructions. I remember that as I sat down to meditate during the early hours of the morning my mind would be disturbed and diverted by the shrill note of the whistle of a neighbouring Jute Mill. I told him about it and he advised me to concentrate my mind on the very sound of the whistle. I followed his advice and derived from it much benefit. On another occasion I felt great difficulty in totally forgetting my body during meditation and concentrating the mind wholly on the ideal. I went to him for counsel and he gave me the very instruction which he himself had received from Totapuri while practising Samâdhi at the time of his Vedântic Sâdhanâ. He sharply pressed between my two eyebrows with his finger nail and said, 'Now concentrate your mind on this painful sensation!' As a result I found I could concentrate easily on that sensation as long as I liked and during that period I completely forgot the consciousness of the other parts of my body, not to speak of their causing any distraction in the way of my meditation. The solitude of the Panchavati, associated with the various spiritual realisations of the Master, was also the most suitable place for our meditation. Besides meditation and spiritual exercises, we used to spend a good deal of time there in sheer fun and merry-making. Sri Ramakrishna also joined with us, and by taking part enhanced our innocent pleasure. We used to run and skip about, climb on the trees, swing from the creepers and at times hold merry picnics. On the first day of the picnic the Master noticed that I myself had cooked the food and he partook of it. I knew that he could not take food unless it was cooked by Brâhmins, and therefore I had arranged for his meal at the Kâli-temple. But he said, 'It won't be wrong for me to take food from such a pure soul like yourself.' In spite of my repeated remonstrations, he enjoyed the food cooked by me that day."

And Naren was in his element at Dakshineswar. All his boyish enthusiasm was let loose there. He was like a young lion sporting joyously in the presence of a strong but indulgent parent. All that pent-up energy of mind and heart which, revealing itself partially before, had brought on a great anguish of mind and tempest of heart, was now free to express itself fully. It manifested itself as a torrent of spiritual energy. Sri Ramakrishna understood and was delighted beyond words. The flights of Naren's soul were visible to him. Like a majestic king, venerable in the long years of his spiritual experience, was the old man; and Naren was like the young prince and heir, full of the fire and energy and vigour of his spiritual inheritance. The Master let Naren's mind work by the force of its own pressure. He allowed the mind of Naren to become its own Guru. He held that sincerity of heart brings on, of itself, the gradual illumination of the mind. He allowed Naren to doubt him, to sound him. He said, "Do not accept anything because I have said so. But test everything for yourself. It is not in assent or dissent that the goal is to be attained, but in actual and concrete realisation." And this Naren did though oftentimes it required infinite patience and entailed much sufferings on the Master.

It may be truly stated that only Narendra Nath, amongst the disciples, fully understood the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. He also weighed the words of the Master in the balance. He alone dared to doubt. But, then, he alone had the glorified conviction with regard to the Master, which comes of having transcended doubt. The other disciples hung with rapt attention upon every word that fell from his lips. They were Bhaktas, they loved the Master. Theirs was the conviction which comes of love. They knew Sri Ramakrishna only through their burning love for him. But Naren would question him. Naren would smile at his statements and criticise them. Naren, too, had love for the Master such as no other disciple had, and it was this love which caused him to respect, to revere and adore him. But he would not be satisfied until he had made his convictions of the truth of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings absolutely infallible, in so far as the analytical intellect was capable of sanctioning the utterances of a saint and seer.

It was this power of searching for truth, partly intellectual and partly spiritual, which filled Sri Ramakrishna with a feeling bordering on respect for Naren. Yes, this was the "Siva-nature" or the "Siva-power" in Naren, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say. On a certain occasion, the Master said to the disciples present pointing to Narendra Nath, "Behold! Here is Naren. See! See! O what power of insight he has! It is like the shoreless sea of radiance! The Mother, Mahâmâyâ Herself, cannot approach more than within ten feet of him! She is bound by the very glory which She has imparted to him!" Then he prayed that the Mother might dim that radiance in order that Naren might be able to work. "O Mother," he prayed, "put a little of Thy Mâyâ into Narendra!" For otherwise, he would be concerned, by the natural tendency of his soul, only with the highest reaches of personal realisation;—he would be immersed in eternal meditation and would be mindful only of the Supreme Reality and thus be lost to the world!

The other disciples accepted Sri Ramakrishna's valuation of Naren as indisputable. Had he not gauged the depths of their own natures also! Had he not, at the very first sight, had the vision of the special forms of divinity to which their minds tended! Had he not told every one of them his secret tendencies! By merely touching them he had imparted powers and realisations unto them! Who were they to doubt when he said of Naren, "He has eighteen extraordinary powers one or two of which are sufficient to make a man famous in the world," or "He is a burning, roaring, fire consuming all impurities to ashes," and added, "Even should Naren live on beef and pork, it could not harm in the least the great power of spirituality within him!"

Wonderful was Sri Ramakrishna's method of teaching. He would seldom enter into the arguments of his disciples. With a word, a glance or a song, he would teach; and the teaching was always, "Realisation is the only goal. When realisation comes into the heart all arguments cease, and the state of divine knowledge shines forth." One day Naren and other disciples were engaged in a tempest of argument,—"Is God Personal or Impersonal? Does God become incarnate or is divine Incarnation a myth?" On and on the argument raged, until it covered all points of theological inquiry. Naren was the victor. He had overwhelmed all their theories. Sri Ramakrishna approached the gathering, and they heard the opening notes of the following song come from his lips:

"O my mind, what avail thy efforts to
realise that Being!
Groping about, as thou dost, like a madman
in a dark room!"

The song continued: "Go into the six schools of philosophy. There that Being thou shalt not find! Neither in the Tantras, nor in the Vedas! That Being is fond of the sweet essence of Love!"

The disputatious disciples sat silent and ecstatic. Yes, here was the great answer to all their questionings. Indeed, Sri Ramakrishna was a teacher who spoke only in the language of realisation. He was not metaphysical. He had seen; he had literally seen the Truth. So, what need of splitting hairs over questions that must remain for ever debatable to the human mind? Like Buddha of old, Sri Ramakrishna had little use for logic. Spirituality is not the attainment of a great development of the faculty for setting fine theories into words. It is realisation. It is character.

It is the conquest of lust and gold. Sri Ramakrishna took the burden of realisation from the plane of discussion into the sphere of personal striving, into the sphere of austerities and of a realistic effort at vision. Whenever the discussion grew hot, he became impatient of "much talk." Often he would compare the disputatious scholars who soared high on the wings of discussions to vultures and kites, which whilst soaring high kept their eye on the carrion beneath. The eyes of vain scholars were likewise fixed on the carrion of name and fame, lust and gold.

But the Master never interfered, no matter how high the discussion rose. He let them talk. They would learn better, he would say. Sometimes, however, he enjoyed it. By it he sensed the spiritual consciousness of his disciples. Verily was the Master's company a great school in the training of the soul. It was all a stimulus to personal growth. Every one was free to utilise his own powers in discovering and realising his personal potentialities. But there were certain special occasions when Sri Ramakrishna would intervene. These were, for example, when Naren's towering thought endangered the limited vision of another. There was that instance when Naren attacked faith as a means to liberation. He spoke of "blind faith". The Master said, "Naren, what do you mean by 'blind faith'? Faith is always blind. Has faith an 'eye'? Why say 'blind faith'? Either simply say 'faith' or say 'Jnâna', knowledge. What do you mean by classifying faith as one kind having an eye, and the other being blind?" By these words Sri Ramakrishna meant to convey that even the highest human knowledge, even all philosophy was "blind faith", as compared with one atom of that realisation which came from an actual perception of Reality. Slowly but surely Naren came to understand that it was not knowledge but realisation which was true religion. Man must see God. Thinking of Reality was good, but better was the vision of it. It took time and much loving patience. But in the end Naren discovered that Sri Ramakrishna's teaching was the eloquent silence of insight. Often, during conversations, Sri Ramakrishna would burst into some soul-stirring utterances. At other times he would leave the disciples to themselves and to their argumentative moods; the discussion ended, they would find him in deepest Samâdhi. This, the disciples came to know after a time, was a silent and eloquent protest to their heated discussion. The most eloquent and convincing power in all the methods of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings was the spiritual radiance of his personal life. His character was the power behind his teaching. The man who preached universal love and toleration lived it. Sri Ramakrishna never attacked any social custom. He did not preach against caste. Himself a Brâhmin, he showed his great love for the outcaste millions who were lowest in the social scale; and he also revealed his sense of utmost humility before his Mother, by performing the most menial of all services, which even the lowest of the outcastes, the Chandâlas and the Pariahs, would shrink from doing.

What were Sri Ramakrishna's answers to questions pertaining to God-vision and methods of realisation? How to pray? "Pray in any form," he would say, "for the Lord hears the footfall even of an ant." How to find God? "By the conquest of lust and gold." Sincerity was the main theme of his teaching. Without sincerity nothing was possible; with sincerity all was possible. He would say to Naren and others that if they but carried out one-sixteenth of what he had done to realise God, they would be blessed for ever.

Is God Personal or Impersonal? "He is both," said Sri Ramakrishna, "and yet He is beyond. Beyond any intellectual or theological dogmas, He is manifest in the soul's own inmost realisation. He assumes any form for the pleasure of His devotee. He is inexpressible. He is not to be put between the covers of a book or in the boundary of a temple." "Is image-worship right or wrong?" Sri Ramakrishna said that all such were idle questions. Worship of anything was true which helped one to see God. Intense longing was the one thing needful.

Sri Ramakrishna was intimately connected with all paths of Sâdhanâ that led to the realisation of God. The all-comprehensive Hindu scriptures prescribe certain methods of worship suited for particular temperaments, which appear rather vulgar and indecent to others. Once the drift of conversation turned to such modes of spiritual discipline. The Master said to Naren, "These people cannot rightly pursue their course of Sâdhanâ. Most of them satisfy their base passions in the name of religion. Well, Naren, you need not hear these things. As regards myself, I look upon all women as my mother. This is a very pure attitude of mind. There is no risk or danger in it. To look upon woman as sister is also not bad. But the other attitudes are very difficult and dangerous. It is almost impossible to keep the purity of the ideal. There are various ways to reach God. Some of these are dirty like the scavenger's entrance to a house. It is really desirable to enter the house by the front door." Then in an exalted mood he said, "There are many opinions and many ways. I do not like these any more. The aspirants of different ways quarrel among themselves. You are my own people. There are no outsiders here. I tell you, I clearly find He is the whole and I am His part. He is the Lord and I am the servant. Again sometimes I think that He is I and I am He."

Sri Ramakrishna's manner of teaching charmed Narendra Nath. It modified his puritanical view of life which he as a Brâhmo had. Sri Ramakrishna could not bear the word "sin"; he had no such terms in his spiritual vocabulary as "born in sin" and "a child of wrath." He admitted that man was born with limitations; but where others fixed their attention upon limitations only, he foresaw that the destiny of every soul was the triumphant conquest of all limitations. On one occasion when Naren was denouncing the degenerating influence of certain weaknesses of schoolboys, believing them to be undermining their character, Sri Ramakrishna chanced to overhear and said, "Why talk of these matters! Talk of the Lord and nothing else." Such was his method of teaching and its substance.

The general teachings which Sri Ramakrishna imparted to his disciples, Narendra Nath assimilated in a unique way. He was the readiest among them all in arriving at their true spirit. His soul was most attuned to the spiritual vibrations of the Master's words. Thus he read volumes where others read but pages of that Revelation unto men which was the life and gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Really Naren possessed a rare insight to interpret Sri Ramakrishna's words. One instance will suffice. One day, some time during the year 1884, Sri Ramakrishna was seated in his room at Dakshineswar surrounded by his disciples among whom was Naren. The conversation drifted to the Vaishnava religion. The Master gave the gist of the cult of Lord Gaurânga and finished by saying, "This religion enjoins upon its followers the practice of three things, viz., relish for the name of God, compassion for all living creatures and service to the

Vaishnavas, the devotees of the Lord. The real meaning of these precepts is this: That God is not different from His name. Therefore one should always repeat His name. God and his devotee, Krishna and the Vaishnava, are not separate from one another. Therefore everyone should show respect to all saints and devotees. Realising this world as belonging to Sri Krishna, utmost compassion should be shown to all creatures." Hardly had he uttered the words, "Compassion to all creatures," when he fell into Samâdhi. After a while he came back to a semi-conscious state of mind and said to himself, "Compassion for creatures! Compassion for creatures! Thou fool! An insignificant worm crawling on earth, thou to show compassion to others! Who art thou to show compassion? No, it cannot be. It is not compassion for others, but rather service to man, recognising him to be the veritable manifestation of God!"

Everyone present there, no doubt, heard those words of Sri Ramakrishna uttered from the innermost consciousness of his soul; but none but Naren could gauge their meaning. When Naren left the room he said to the others, "What a strange light have I discovered in those wonderful words of the Master! How beautifully has he reconciled the ideal of Bhakti with the knowledge of the Vedânta, generally interpreted as hard, austere and inimical to human sentiments and emotions! What a grand, natural and sweet synthesis! The ordinary impression is that the culture of the knowledge of Vedânta demands an utter ostracism of society and humanity and a rooting out of all tender sentiments such as love, devotion, compassion etc. The aspirant thus goes astray in cherishing an uncompromising hatred towards the world and his fellow creatures, thinking them as impediments in the way of spiritual attainments. But from those words of wisdom which Sri Ramakrishna uttered in an ecstatic mood, I have understood that the ideal of Vedânta lived by the recluse outside the pale of society can be practised even from hearth and home and applied to all our daily schemes of life. Whatever may be the avocation of a man, let him understand and realise that it is God alone who has manifested Himself as the world and created beings. He is both immanent and transcendent. It is He who has become all diverse creatures, objects of our love, respect or compassion and yet he is beyond all these. Such realisation of Divinity in humanity leaves no room for arrogance. By realising it a man cannot have any jealousy or pity for any other being. Service of man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God, purifies the heart and, in no time, such an aspirant realises himself as part and parcel of God, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

"Those words of Sri Ramakrishna throw an altogether new light upon the path of devotion. Real devotion is far off until the aspirant realises the immanence of God. By realising Him in and through all beings and by serving Him through humanity, the devotee acquires real devotion. Those following the paths of work and Yoga are similarly benefited by those words of the Master. The embodied being cannot remain even for a minute without doing any work. All his activities should be directed to the service of man, the manifestation of God upon earth, and this will accelerate his progress towards the goal. However, if it be the will of God, the day will soon come when I shall proclaim this grand truth before the world at large. I shall make it the common property of all, the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, the Brâhmin and the Pariah."

It must be constantly borne in mind that the whole gist of the Master's personality and teaching was the very essence of Hinduism. It was not a sectarian Hinduism, but that wide and all-comprehending attitude of the soul which has been in a marked degree a Hindu racial ideal at all times. On the surface it appears as a rigidity of ceremonial form and as a congeries of unbelievable myths. But with the background of the Advaita philosophy, the whole setting and details are seen in an altogether different light. Therefore when Naren came to Sri Ramakrishna he found an altogether new theology. True, it was the same theology which he had been taught from his infancy, but he was now approaching it with understanding, whereas, as a child, he had imbibed it without reason, simply as a matter of custom and heredity. Formerly when the intellect aroused itself, doubt also arose; but now a new order of thought, a new outlook was being opened. For, the very life of Sri Ramakrishna revealed to him potentialities and realities in Hinduism he had never dreamt of. The Hinduism of Sri Ramakrishna was a positive, practical and living realisation. However Naren might question the actuality of the spiritual ideals and gods with which Hinduism abounds, he could not doubt the earnestness of his Master. Sri Ramakrishna injected a living spirit into Hinduism. It might be superstition, thought Naren at first; the Master himself might be a madman, but it must be a remarkable superstition which enabled this madman to transmit spirituality even by a touch! To Sri Ramakrishna Hinduism was alive. And, in this, how superior was it, thought Naren, to the theologically healthy but spiritually lifeless body of Brâhmoism! For him, at least, Brâhmoism did not emanate a burning and contagious spirituality. It was more of a social reform movement, even though the members, considered individually, might be possessed of great spiritual aspiration. And did not Kesab Chandra Sen, the leading spirit of the Brâhmo movement, come and sit at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, according him honour and worship bordering on that given to Divinity?

To Sri Ramakrishna Naren was indebted for his introduction to Hinduism. This understanding was a process. Naren came by it in watching his Master in religious worship, in religious teaching and in religious ecstasy. The spirit of this understanding was communicated to Naren in spite of himself. The Master injected his own consciousness, his own personal realisation of the Mother and of Hinduism into the soul of Naren. How he did this is not fully known. The process was purely spiritual and too subtle to be explained. The doubting Naren was passing away; the devotional Naren, the spiritual Naren,—Naren, the Hindu,—was being born.

In those days Naren, in common with many Brâhmos feared for the psychical consequences of intense meditation, and too much inebriation from the love of God. Sri Ramakrishna quieted him on this point saying, "God is like an ocean of syrup. Would you not dive into it? Suppose, my boy, there is a vessel with a wide mouth containing syrup, and suppose you are a fly anxious to drink of the sweet fluid. How would you like to drink of it?" Naren said to him in reply that he would like to sit on the edge and drink from the vessel, adding that if he chanced to fall in he was sure to be drowned and thus lose his life. Thereupon the Master said to him, "You forget, my boy, this is the ocean of Sachchidânanda, the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Here one need not be afraid of death. This is the Ocean of Immortality. Only fools say that one should not run to excess in one's love and devotion for God. Can anybody ever carry to excess his love for the Divine? Therefore I say to you, dive deep into the Ocean of God." And Naren followed this advice in his life. His intellect might have questioned, but his heart went straight to the goal.

At this time, strange experiences came to him. Many times he saw Sri Ramakrishna in meditation when he himself was at home and the Master in distant Dakshineswar. One night, Naren dreamt that Sri Ramakrishna came to him and said, "Come! I will show you Gopi Radha!" Naren followed him. After having gone some distance, the Master turned to him and said, "Where else will you go?" Saying this, Sri Ramakrishna transformed himself into the beautiful personality and exquisite form of Radha herself. This so affected the conscious mind of Naren that whereas, formerly, he had only sung songs of the Brâhmo Samâj relating to the Formless Brahman, he now sang songs to the great spiritual love of Radha, the individual soul, for Sri Krishna, the Indwelling Beloved One. When he narrated this dream to his brother disciples, they were amazed. One asked him, "Do you believe in the significance of this?" And Naren answered, "Surely I do."

Sometimes, Naren would see his "double" as it were, following meditation. It would appear as one just like himself, of the same shape and form, and he wondered, "Who is this?" It would respond to all his actions like an image reflected in a mirror and remain with him sometimes for more than an hour. He told Sri Ramakrishna of it, and the Master passed it over lightly, saying, "It is only an incident in the higher stages of meditation."

Naren once longed to be lost, forgetful of all outer things, in Bhâva or the ecstatic state. He saw how the devotees of the Master, such as Nityagopal and Manomohan, would fall to the ground seemingly lifeless at the chanting of the names of God. He was much depressed that he was unable to enter these states of blessedness in a like manner, and he complained about it to Sri Ramakrishna. The Master regarding him with tenderness replied, "My child, do not be disturbed. What does it matter? When a huge elephant runs into a pond, it sets up a great commotion in it, but if it goes into the waters of the Ganges, little commotion is set up. These devotees are, as it were, small ponds. A little of this great power of Divine Love coming into the enclosure of these small ponds lashes the water into a fury; but you are like the huge river."

About this time Naren passed through a test which proved that he was a roaring fire of spirituality and renunciation. Some of his wealthy friends one day invited him for a drive to their garden in the suburbs of Calcutta. He consented joyfully but had no idea what sort of an evening drive it would be. They stopped in front of a house and all alighted and entered the grounds where a garden party was being held. Merry-makers were these and Naren enjoyed their singing and sang himself. After a time he grew tired and was told that he might rest comfortably in an adjoining room. His friends seeing him alone sent a dancing girl to amuse him. He was as simple as a child and talked to her like a brother. She told him many interesting things about her life, telling him of her sorrows and misfortunes. Seeing that she had engaged all his interest and sympathy she misinterpreted his attitude and took a fancy to make him know what she felt. Instantly he remembered Sri Ramakrishna and thought of God. He became serious and started to his feet and said to the girl, "Excuse me, I must be going now. I have a genuine sympathy for you and wish you well. If you know that it is a weakness to lead such a life, you will get over it some day." They parted. The girl returned in bewilderment and said to Naren's friends sarcastically, "It is a nice trick you have played upon me, sending me to tempt a Sâdhu!" Such was the great influence Sri Ramakrishna had cast on Naren.

One cannot bask in the radiance of a great personality without having the inner powers and potentialities aroused. Naren also acquired power and personality and a great spiritual consciousness at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna. The words of hope and strength which the Master spoke concerning him invigorated him. He became conscious of his future greatness. Once he said to his friends, "What! At best you will be lawyers or doctors or judges. Wait, I shall chalk out a path for myself." He felt sure of himself because the Master was so sure of him. He saw famous men—physicians, lawyers, scholars and religious teachers—who came to the Master all gathered together by his personality. Physicians tested his trances and his renunciation of gold; even when outward consciousness had receded the body would shrink in response to the slightest contact with gold. Scholars noted down his sayings and found them to be utterances of the highest realisations. All were convinced of the spiritual greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. Naren was also convinced of his greatness, and the Master, too, had given him the foremost place among his disciples and devotees, though from a worldly point of view Naren knew he was nothing when compared with many of these. This enhanced Naren's self-reliance. The Master was not guided by worldly position in his choice. To one who was enormously rich and who won the title of Râjâ, he said, "People call you Râjâ. But I cannot do so! That will be a lie on my part." To another, a self-styled philanthropist, he said, "You are a small minded man, low born as you are."

Thus Naren's all-round development, physical, intellectual and spiritual, was due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna. Naren had the native graceful bearing of a wild animal, with absolute freedom of motion. He would walk along, now slowly and then with speed, his mind absorbed in thoughts which literally swept his soul. And yet, he had a certain boyishness of spirit about him and a spontaneity of manner which were a delight to all who knew him.

His appearance was that of a young man full of vigour and vitality, with a frame slightly above the middle height and somewhat thick-set in the shoulders. His chest was expansive. His head was broad towards the front, indicative of high mental power and development. It was well shaped throughout. Indeed, he was one of the few men of whom it can be said, without intimating any femininity of type, that he was graceful. His eyes were the most striking of his features. They were often likened to lotus petals. They were rather prominent, though not protruding, and varied greatly in their colour according to the feelings of the moment. They revealed a keen, alert mind. Sometimes they were luminous in the depth and steadfastness of gaze; at other times they would sparkle with pleasure and excitement. When he spoke, it was as if, for the time being, only the person spoken to existed; one could not but feel flattered. Some accused him of intellectual avariciousness, if such a term can be used, and said that his interest in any one ceased when "he had wrung him dry," to use their own expression. But it was always true of him that he gave more than he received. It was an intellectual exchange. He was muscular and athletic in his build and of striking carriage. But one lost sight altogether of the body, being all-absorbed in the interest of studying the face. He had a strong jaw, evidence of an iron will and fixed determination. He seemed to some as a joyous dreamer, to others as an intense thinker, to others again, as one who lived in a world rich with ideal love and beauty; but to all he seemed as a scion of an aristocratic house. His smile was benignant and merry.

But when he grew serious, his face would strike awe into the hearts of his companions. There were times when many of his brother disciples regarded him as a child; and they loved him all the more even when he was irritating or exacting or impetuous. When he became excited in discussion, or was rapt in thought, his face and eyes would blaze, revealing the tremendous power of his personality. When he was absorbed in his own thoughts he could send such a force of repelling reserve that one would not dare to approach him. In fact intense aloofness was one of his striking traits. His was the temperament of a genius. Various moods would come upon him, now of a strange impatience with his environment, and again of a sweet and loving patience as of one who is indifferent to results of plans and enthusiastic desires, and who possesses a sense of having eternity at his back. And it might be said that considering the difficulties under which he laboured and suffered, and also the scant appreciation from those for whom he laboured and suffered, it was a wonder that his heart did not become like steel. But love and the spirit of gentle bearing remained with him throughout. He would say to himself, "Why should one expect to be understood! It is sufficient that they love me! After all who am I! The Mother knows best. She can do Her work. Who am I to think myself indispensable." Indeed, his was a radiant personality, a gracious personality and, withal, a powerful personality.

The love which Sri Ramakrishna bore for him, struck a balance between his intellect and heart. By instinct Naren was a philosopher. Sri Ramakrishna made him a devotee. But, lest it be thought that the Master developed only so much religious and emotional sentimentality in his disciple, let it be remembered that the highest philosophical realisation which Naren ever came to experience was, likewise, due to Sri Ramakrishna. Insight, tempered and softened by spiritual love, was the foundation of his spirituality. Naren was the philosopher in a unique sense. Though, to all appearances, he was primarily a philosopher, the Master used to say that only a Bhakta, or a devotee of God, could have such amiable and pleasing features. "Jnânis are generally dry in their appearance; but Bhaktas are sweet to look upon." Whatever this might have been, the words of Naren himself are best illustrative of his true nature. As Swami Vivekananda he once said to a disciple of his making a comparison between himself and the Master, "He was all Bhakti without, but within he was all Jnâna: I am all Jnâna without; but within my heart it is all Bhakti." He meant by this that a great mantle of love hid the spiritual intellect of the Master, and a mantle of intelligence covered, as a cloak, the devotional nature within himself.

His afflictions and poverty drew out one side of Naren's character, his associations another. Sri Ramakrishna perfected these two characters and moulded him according to the ideal he had in mind, the ideal which became living and incarnate as the Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna said that, had Naren been nurtured in luxury and comfort he would have certainly drifted in some other direction. He might have become a great statesman, a great lawyer, a great orator or social reformer. But poverty had given Naren sympathy with the poor. The divine character of his Master had proved to him that there was a difference between intellectuality and spirituality. Philosophy thus became to him a handmaiden for spiritual realisation. It verified his spiritual experiences. He did not denounce the intellect; he acclaimed it. But hereafter he made reason subordinate to spiritual realisation. Prayer and meditation were the wings upon which Naren now rose to the spiritual consciousness.

How wonderful was the Master's love! After the passing away of Naren's father, Sri Ramakrishna said to an influential devotee, "Naren's father is dead. They are starving at home. Now it will be good if his friends help him." When the gentleman had taken his departure, Naren said, rather piqued, "Sir! Why did you tell that to him?" Sri Ramakrishna, seeing that he had hurt his disciple's sense of family pride in having thus made mention of their misfortunes, exclaimed with tears in his eyes, "O my Naren, do you not know that I would do anything for you; that for you I would even go about begging from door to door!" Naren was overpowered. This was love in very truth. It was overwhelming and selfless love. "It was true," as Naren said of himself in relation to his Master at a much later period, "he made me his slave by his great love for me!"

As has been seen Sri Ramakrishna was much alarmed when the relatives of Naren were planning for his marriage. His love for Naren, his desire to save him from the life of the world, made the Master prostrate before the feet of the Mother. He prayed to Her many times, "Oh Mother, do break up all these plans! May Narendra not sink!" But however great might be the love of the Master for Naren, he would be strict with him if he at any time associated with evil companions, even if only by the way. Did the slightest shadow of an impure thought cross Naren's mind, Sri Ramakrishna at once detected it. When Naren came to him, after having associated with any questionable person, he would say that he could not even look him in the face nor could he eat from His hand.

Naren's bright future was always present before Sri Ramakrishna's vision. He knew that Naren's was the path of renunciation. He directed the entire course of Naren's training towards this end. In that light he scrutinised his every movement. Once he found that Naren associated intimately with a devotee who had led a worldly life, and he warned Naren. But he protested that the devotee had given up his questionable habits. Sri Ramakrishna said, "However much you may wash the pot where garlic is kept, still some smell will linger. The boys are pure. They are as yet uncontaminated with any idea of lust and gold. You have seen mangoes that have been picked by crows. These mangoes cannot be offered to God nor be eaten by man. The devotees who have tasted worldly pleasure, belong to another group. A group of monks was seated together thinking of God. Some women passed by. One of the monks opened his eyes and cast oblique glances at them. He had renounced the world after being the father of three children. You cannot expect figs from thistles.

Worldly men have no leisure to think of God. But do you think I hate them? No, never. I find God has become all these. I look upon all women as my Mother. So I find no difference between a chaste woman and a girl of ill-fame . . . . I find every one seeks glass beads. No one wants diamonds. Man is enamoured of lust. He is caught in the glamour of wealth and riches. But to one who has seen God, these appear as worthless trifles. Some one said to Râvana, 'You go to Sita assuming all forms in order to intimidate or humour her. Why don't you take the form of Rama so that she may take you for her husband?' Ravana replied, 'If I meditate upon Rama, even the most exquisite beauty of the world appears as mere straw.' Devotion to God is impossible without purity of heart. An impure man cannot have single-minded devotion. His mind is diverted to various things. You cannot expect anything when you are attached to lust and gold. It is extremely difficult for a worldly man to be perfectly unattached. He is a slave to his wife, slave to his money and slave to his master." Then looking at Naren, he said, "My dear boy, you will never attain to your goal if you are attached to lust and gold." Verily as the sun is vastly above the earth, so was this Guru above all other Gurus: The Master and Naren transcended all traditional ideas of Guru and disciple. And was it wonderful that Naren should have counted, towards the close of his active life, these days of ecstasy at Dakshineswar, as days of eternal blessedness?

Such was the teaching Sri Ramakrishna gave to Naren during the first four years of their relationship, and such was the environment in which Naren grew beyond the confines of his utmost spiritual hopes. It is difficult to state, from a chronological point of view, just when Naren became the disciple of the Master.

From a mystical point of view he had become the disciple when Sri Ramakrishna touched his heart. It was then that the Master literally took possession of him. But consciously Naren became the disciple only when his intellect had been convinced, which was a process of some months. But when he became the disciple, it was irrevocable. The period in which his mind hesitated before fully accepting the Master was part of his training. Had he accepted him from the very beginning, without understanding, he would not have become Swami Vivekananda, possessed of the power of convincing others because he himself had gone through the process of being convinced.

For six years Naren had the company of his Guru. These years were a period of silent realisations, silent teaching and silent assimilation. Every time Naren visited Dakshineswar it was a stirring event both to himself and the Master, marking the intensification of their relationship and the absorption of ideas and ideals on the part of the disciple. He was becoming saturated with spirituality. Sri Ramakrishna gave him all that was to be given, all that he had. Sri Ramakrishna was like one who had struggled hard amidst almost insuperable difficulties to acquire a great treasure, and Naren was the son and heir who was to reap this treasure. Sri Ramakrishna had built up a great spiritual empire by conquering the dangerous invaders—lust and gold. Naren was to extend this empire over the earth. Sri Ramakrishna had dived deep down into the spiritual ocean. Naren was to show to the world the treasures which the Master had found therein. Sri Ramakrishna was the realisation and insight, and Naren was to become the utterance thereof.

Through Naren one is able to enter the group of devotees first at Dakshineswar, later on at Shyâmpukur and Cossipore, and witness the spiritual experiences and observe the methods of teaching of the Master. The training was all directed to making the disciples aware by a gradual process that all religions are paths to God and that all are essentially one. Naren judged Sri Ramakrishna from the broad standpoint of religion. Whether he was literally an Incarnation of God or not, did not occupy the attention of Naren. He saw the character of the Master. That told a more complete tale in the way of revelation than all the most well-balanced metaphysical theories put together. Naren's views at this time were broad, in fact too broad for the average understanding. He accepted Sri Ramakrishna in a larger sense than most of those about him. He often grew impatient over their tendency towards fanatical, limited and prejudicial acceptance of the Master. He held him in too high a reverence to place his personality into the narrow measure of the understanding of the Incarnation theory. Naren was too matter-of-fact spiritually to be self-deluded. He unconsciously accepted Sri Ramakrishna's life as the demonstration of means towards all spiritual ends. He saw the spiritual path-finder in him. He heard his words as utterances of human verity in regard to the highest possibilities of the spiritual life. He instinctively sensed in Sri Ramakrishna that which he later understood in the light of the science of a spiritual psychology, namely, that human personality can transcend its own boundaries by the sheer effort of intensification of transpersonal ideals. All the efforts of the saints had been this. And in Sri Ramakrishna Naren saw these efforts brought into the highest possible practice and realisation. He saw him in an intensely human light as the re-maker and preserver of the Hindu Dharma; and in this light he saw in

Sri Ramakrishna a new Chaitanya, a new Sankarâchârya, a new Buddha; aye, even more, for the difficulties which stood in the way of the reinvigoration of Hinduism were far more numerous and serious in the present age than at any previous time. Instinctively Naren realised all this as a fact; and instinctively he saw the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna. This consummation was brought about at Shyampukur, and more intensely, at the garden house of Cossipore.

It was in the middle of 1885 that Sri Ramakrishna showed the first symptom of a throat trouble which ultimately ended in the fatal cancer. He suffered so much from the intense heat of the summer that he began the use of ice. After a month or two he developed pain in his throat which was aggravated by talking and Samâdhi. A physician was consulted who prescribed the necessary medicine and warned him against much talking, and at the same time cautioned the devotees against his going into Samâdhi too often. But all attempts of the devotees to control the Master proved futile. At about that time Sri Ramakrishna attended a festival at Pânihâti, in the suburb of Calcutta, spending the whole day in singing and dancing and often going into Samâdhi. The result was an aggravation of the disease. The doctors now definitely diagnosed it as "Clergyman's sore throat." The Master carried out the instructions of the physician in all things but in the two essentials. Whenever there was an occasion for deep spiritual converse, he would lose all body-consciousness and go into ecstasies, or when afflicted people came to him for solace he would talk, no matter what it cost him. At the same time his communion with God was intensified; he had no regular hours for food or drink; most of his time was spent in meditation and prayer, which with him meant Samâdhi. This made the last year of his life a slow crucifixion.

The devotees naturally became anxious. Narendra fully realised the gravity of the situation. He remarked to a friend, "I am afraid the object of our love and adoration will not live for long. I have read the medical books and consulted some doctor-friends about his disease and I am afraid his throat trouble has turned into cancer, the cure for which has not yet been discovered." Sri Ramakrishna readily agreed to the proposal of going to Calcutta for systematic treatment. Accordingly a small house was rented, but the Master did not like it and straightway left for Balaram Bose's place at Bâghbazar. Within a week he was removed to a spacious house at Shyampukur. Doctor Mahendra Lâl Sarkar, the leading Homoeopath of Calcutta, was asked to undertake his treatment. Naren organised the nursing; the Holy Mother came from Dakshineswar to do the cooking. Naren's deep love for the Master, his wonderful self-sacrifice and intense enthusiasm greatly influenced the other disciples and they all resolved to devote their lives to the service of their spiritual guide and to the realisation of God. They forgot their studies and home. Their parents and guardians began to interfere; but for the zeal and encouragement of Naren, it would have been almost impossible for them to have continued the course they mapped out for themselves.

As none of the householder devotees was rich enough to bear the expenses single-handed, at times their faith wavered and they wondered where the money to meet the expenses was to come from. They feared that they might even have to give way to the demands of their families and return to their homes. Whenever this happened some fresh proofs of divinity in Sri Ramakrishna would become manifest to convince them that he was the Lord Himself. Then they would reproach themselves saying, "Why this baseless apprehension, this anxiety about funds? Sri Ramakrishna himself will provide the means." They were convinced that any service rendered to the Master would be conducive to their highest spiritual welfare, and they realised that his illness gave all an opportunity of service to the Guru, every one according to his full capacity. So the householders resolved to spend their last farthing in the service of the Master, and the young Brahmachârins gave their energies in personal service. All were upheld by an unbounded enthusiasm which was strengthened and stimulated by the spiritual revelations of Sri Ramakrishna. Many who were unable to go to Dakshineswar to see him found the opportunity at Shyampukur.

Naturally, there was much speculation as to the reason for the Master's illness among the devotees. Some ascribed it to the will of the Divine Mother as being necessary for the fulfilment of a particular purpose; others thought that it was self-imposed by an Incarnation of the Divine to help mankind; a third group concluded that as birth, disease, decay and death are all incidental and inevitable phases of human life, the disease of the Master was a perfectly natural phenomenon, and that it was foolish to give a mystic or supernatural explanation to it. At the same time they were willing to shed the last drop of their blood in his service and to mould their lives in accordance with the lofty spiritual ideal given to them by the Master. Needless to say that Narendra Nath was the leader of the last group which consisted mostly of young men reading in schools and colleges. Though different groups of devotees regarded the Master variously as an Incarnation of God, a superman or a God-man, all of them were convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that the goal of life would be realised if they could emulate his example and render him service.

Naren was not a fanatic. Yet he had to acknowledge that before him he saw the loving, struggling, suffering human personality transformed the next moment into a divine personality. The human and the divine, he began to see, were inseparably related. Thus, by degrees, he came to know religion as a genuine human fact, its achievements lying in realistic efforts and the actual conquest of human limitations. He saw this enacted before him daily by Sri Ramakrishna. In the face of this what mattered belief? Realisation is the great desideratum. Sri Ramakrishna was the man of realisation. Naren aspired ever to be like him. The voice of his Master, his tears and smiles during his spiritual experiences, the manner in which he walked and ate and performed the thousand and one things of daily life became gospels, apocalyptic revelations unto him. Naren sat at the feet of the Master and in his eyes he read the whole meaning of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

He did not accept Sri Ramakrishna as an Incarnation of God nor again as an ordinary human being. One day in reply to certain criticisms of Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, the attending physician, Narendra Nath said, "Sir, we look upon the Master as a person who is like God. Let me make my idea clear to you. There is a point somewhere between the vegetable and animal creation where it is difficult to say whether a thing is an animal or a plant. Much in the same way, there is a point somewhere between the man-world and the God-world where one cannot say with certainty whether a person is human or divine." He concluded by saying, "We look upon him not as God but as a God-like person. And hence we offer him worship bordering on divine worship."

The Master knowing that he was approaching the end of his mortal existence was all the more eager to kindle in the heart of his chief disciples a burning desire for the realisation of God, which can only be attained by reducing to ashes all attachment to lust and gold. Therefore, his utterances at Shyampukur are replete with a spirit of utter renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna not only imparted his spiritual teaching to his disciples, but he gave them likewise the stimulus and the strength to follow those teachings. His own life, the force of his utterances, the ease with which he slipped into the highest Samâdhi and his communion with Divine Realities,—all these were as a great Light by which they gained a glorious spiritual consciousness. Coming at a time when Naren was being buffeted on all sides, the Master's teaching sank deep into his heart to remain there for ever, a beacon light to show him the way through the wilderness of illusion.

When Doctor Mahendra Lal Sarkar, the Master's attending physician, met Naren he was delighted with his conversations and invited him to dinner. Later when he heard him sing at Shyampukur, he was so pleased that he embraced and blessed him. He said to Sri Ramakrishna, "I am very glad to see that it is boys like him who come here for religious instruction. Naren is a real gem, fit to shine in any sphere of life." The Master replied, "They say that the fiery appeal of Advaita Goswâmi brought about the Incarnation of Sri Gauranga at Nadia. Similarly everything that you see here (meaning his own advent) is on account of him (Narendra Nath)."

Of all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Naren, though very young, possessed the most penetrating intellect, as was shown by his keen observation and comprehensive outlook on life. This, in a measure, made him their natural leader, competent to chide as well as to guide, as will be shown by what follows.

While companionship with Sri Ramakrishna and whole-hearted service to him gave the devotees increased faith and devotion, they were unconsciously walking on a very dangerous road. The emotions of the boys were more or less stirred up by the tragic picture unfolding before their eyes. To those of them who were of the more sentimental type, these emotions were insidiously replacing the sterner ideals of renunciation and self-restraint which are the bed-rock of spirituality. Emotion is good in its place, but it is not the goal—and too much indulgence therein might even cause one to miss the object to be attained. Of course, there were some reasons for their taking this mistaken view of spirituality. The mind naturally seeks the line of least resistance trying to make a compromise between God and the world, between renunciation and enjoyment. Few realise their contradictory nature and are satisfied with a partial success in spiritual matters. Sri Ramakrishna, knowing this, tested new-comers to see if their idea was of a comfortable religion, one that would not interfere with the satisfaction of their worldly desires. In such cases he never gave the entire spiritual truth but contented himself with imparting as much as they would find easy to accept and assimilate. This made for individual training. Of course, his instruction to householders was different from that given to his young boys not yet contaminated by the world. His general instructions were still different. There we find him saying, "In this Kali-Yuga the only way to cultivate spirituality is by chanting the name of the Lord and following the path of devotion as marked out by the sage Nârada." The devotees, however, did not realise the full significance of these words, that Narada taught complete renunciation of the world through love of God by a gradual process.

Another cause of the devotees' error seems to have been their lack of comprehension of the significance of Sri Ramakrishna's life. In moments of spiritual uplift they would see the Master weep and dance before he became lost in Samâdhi. But his emotion, unlike theirs, had as its background a life of stern austerity and uncompromising renunciation and was evidence of strength rather than weakness. The situation had come to this pass when Girish Chandra Ghosh arrived on the scene. Girish openly proclaimed the Master to be an Incarnation of God, and he tried to induce everyone to share his conviction. This proved nearly fatal to the disciples, for Girish's case was a unique one. With none of his sincerity, there were some who went about declaring that they had given Sri Ramakrishna the "power of attorney" like Girish in spiritual matters and had therefore no need of any discipline. Girish soon was supported in his views by Ram Chandra Datta who thought the Master to be Sri Krishna and Sri Gauranga. Encouraged by Girish's public announcement, he busied himself in working out fully his Incarnation theory and even went so far as to assign to different devotees the respective rôles they had played with the above-named Incarnations. Those who displayed the greatest amount of sentimentality were spiritually the highest in his estimation.

Matters were brought to a head by Vijay Krishna Goswami, the great Brâhmo preacher, who, though not a disciple of the Master, had had a vision of him as he sat in meditation in his room at Dacca. He lost no time in going to see the Master to tell him, "I have travelled all over the country and met many spiritual persons. But I have found none like you. Here is the full quota of sixteen annas; whereas at other places I have found but two, three or four annas at the most. I saw you at Dacca in a vision and I have no doubts of you. People do not understand you because you are so easy of access. You live very near to Calcutta. The mere wish brings us to you. There is no difficulty of conveyance. Therefore, we cannot properly estimate your value. But had you been seated on the summit of a high mountain the journey to which would mean great trouble and hardships, then we would have regarded you in a different light. Now we think that if such a very spiritual man lives near us, how great must be the spirituality of those who live far off! That is why we roam hither and thither in quest of spirituality instead of coming to see you."

It may be easily seen that Vijay's presence at Shyampukur caused the smouldering embers to burst into flame. The belief in the Master as a Divine Incarnation spread among the devotees like wild fire. Some of them waited in eager expectancy for miraculous manifestations of Sri Ramakrishna's divine power; others would fall into partial trances accompanied by convulsions on hearing devotional music or the like.

Narendra Nath was the first to realise the dangers of the path the devotees were taking. He tried to convince the young disciples of their danger by telling them, "The effusion of sentiment which is not attended by a corresponding transformation of character and which is not strong enough to destroy the cravings of lust and gold by awakening in the heart an enthusiasm for the vision of God—

is neither deep nor of any real value in the realm of spirituality. Physical contortions, tears, horripilations, and even momentary trance which result from this wrong emotion are, in reality, hysterical. These should be controlled by a determined effort. If that fails one should take a nutritious diet or even consult a doctor. For unconsciously, you are feigning these things. It is only in rare individuals of gigantic spirituality that those emotions, overflowing the walls of restraint and appearing as trance or the shedding of tears, etc., are genuine. But ignorant people do not realise this and think that these outward symptoms, of themselves, indicate deep spiritual fervour. So instead of practising restraint, devotion and renunciation they studiously cultivate these effusions with the result that their weakened nerves respond in this way to the slightest religious stimulus. If this is allowed to go on unchecked the result is physical and mental disaster. Of one hundred persons who take up the spiritual life eighty turn out to be charlatans and fifteen become insane. Only the remaining five may be blessed with a vision of real truth. Therefore beware."

That Naren was right was proved when it transpired later that some of those emotional outbursts had been carefully rehearsed at home; other cases were mere imitation. These yielded to an increase of food and sustained efforts at self-control. When these simple methods failed Naren would make the individual the butt of searing ridicule. He hated the weakness that prompted the surrender of straightforwardness and discrimination. He placed positive ideals before the young disciples and tried to appeal to their innate strength. He would gather them together and through songs pregnant with the ideas of renunciation and sincere devotion keep their minds surcharged with the ideals of austerity and real dispassion for the ephemeral objects of the world. He would depict to them in glowing colours the soul-stirring events of the Master's Sâdhanâ period and keep them spell-bound by dwelling on his real greatness. Quoting from the "Imitation of Christ," he would say, "If one really loves the Lord, he must mould his life according to the ideals of the Master. Therefore this is the real touchstone of our love for Sri Ramakrishna." Again he would remind them of the Master's teaching, "Keep the knowledge of Advaita in your pocket and then act as you like in the world." He explained to them that the emotional side of the Master's life was founded upon discrimination and that therefore they must, above all, in their efforts to imitate him, try to discriminate between the real and the unreal.

While Naren was thus engaged in his own spiritual pursuits and in shaping the character of his young brother disciples, the condition of the Master was going from bad to worse. Medicines proved of no avail. Dr. Mahendra Lal thought that it might be due to the foul and congested air of Calcutta and advised removal to some garden-house in the suburbs. After a vigorous search the garden-house belonging to Gopâl Chandra Ghosh at Cossipore was hired on rupees eighty a month. On the afternoon of 11th December, 1885, the Master was removed to the new premises. He felt much refreshed at this new place on account of its beautiful scenery, free air and solitude.

XI

COSSIPORE AND THE PASSING OF THE MASTER

With Cossipore is ushered in the last scene of the wonderful life of the Master, the pathos and sublimity of which is like the melting beauty of the setting sun. These were days of intense physical suffering, yet of ineffable bliss, for he felt that he had fulfilled his mission on earth and was leaving behind him a number of youthful, all-renouncing and determined disciples who would carry on his message. His great hope lay in Narendra Nath and even on his death-bed he devoted himself to the task of moulding his and some of the others' lives and characters. Of his approaching end he gave ample hints to the devotees: "I shall make the whole thing public before I go," "When people in large numbers will begin to whisper about the greatness of this body, then the Mother will take it back," "Devotees will be sifted into inner and outer circles towards the end," and so on.

Naren grew in power and spiritual vigour from day to day, while Sri Ramakrishna grew worse, although in his mind and heart burned the same divine flame, all the greater in its luminousness and intensity because of his physical sufferings. The disciples nursed him faithfully, making their service to the Guru, literally, an act of worship. But nothing could stay the progress of the disease. The Master was again commanded by his physician not to strain his throat by talking. But he could not resist the urge to transmit his knowledge to the multitude of religious aspirants who flocked to him at all hours.

Day after day the body of the Master grew weaker and weaker. The boys, under the direction and supervision of Naren, gave all their time to nursing him. This required that they stay day and night at the Cossipore garden. It meant serious objections and opposition from their guardians. Naren had been then studying for the law examination and at this time the lawsuit with some of his relatives, which we have mentioned, was pending in the Courts of Calcutta. The latter made it imperative for him to be in Calcutta part of the time; but he resolved to do his studying in the time left to him at Cossipore.

Sri Ramakrishna was now practically alone with these young men. Having given up their homes for the time at the urgent desire of Naren they gave themselves up in unparalleled loving and devoted service to Sri Ramakrishna. Naren was to them a constant source of inspiration. During their leisure periods, he would gather them together, and the time was spent in study, music, conversations and discussions of the divine traits of their Master's character. Naren's personality was like a blazing fire, the welding heat of which united the various heterogeneous elements of the boys into a homogeneous whole, possessed, as it were, of one body and one soul. They were twelve[1] in number, every one of them a tower of strength in consecration and single-minded devotion.

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[1] The names of these twelve are Narendra, Râkhal, Bâburâm, Niranjan, Jogin, Lâtu, Târak, Gopâl Senior, Kâli, Sasi, Sarat, and Gopâl Junior. Sâradâ on account of the persecution of his father used to come only now and then and stay for a day or two. Harish stayed only for a few days, after which his brain was deranged and he went home. Hari and Gangâdhar would come at intervals and practise Tapasya at home.

As the end of the Master came nearer Narendra Nath's hankering after the realisation of God increased and intensified. His heart was like a seething cauldron. One night after deciding to go home for a day or two to settle some household affairs he went to bed but could not sleep. Calling Sarat, Junior Gopal and a few others to him he said, "Come, let us have a walk in the garden." As they walked about Naren said, "The Master's disease is most severe. May it not be that he intends to lay down his body! Strive your best for spiritual uplift through service unto him and prayer and meditation, while yet there is time. After his passing away, there will be no end to your repentance. We are wasting our time in the foolish thought that we shall pray to God after finishing this or that business at hand. That is only fastening more chains of desires on us, and desire means death. We must root that out at once."

In that cold starry night they felt a great urge to meditation. A stack of dry hay and twigs was lying near. Naren said, "Set fire to it. It is at this hour that the monks light their Dhuni fires. Let us do the same and burn our desires." The fire was lighted and the boys sat around it, feeling that they were really making a bonfire of their desires and being actually purged of all impurities.

One day Sri Ramakrishna initiated Naren with the name of Rama, telling him that it was the Mantra which he had received from his own Guru. In consequence of this Naren's emotions were stirred to tremendous heights. Towards the evening he began to encircle the house, repeating the name of the Lord, "Rama! Rama!" in a high and excited voice. All outward consciousness had apparently gone and he was full of ecstatic fire. When the Master was informed of this, he only said, "Let him be, he will come round in due course." The emotional storm subsided in a few hours and Naren became his old self again.

The Cossipore garden-house became a Temple and a University Hall in one. At times philosophy held the floor; again devotion rose high; singing and chanting would fill the time that could be snatched from nursing. The Master would send Naren and other disciples to meditate. And Naren in the intensity of his meditations had many realisations. Or the Master would ask him to sing; and in his song great waves of rapturous love for God would sweep over him carrying him on to regions of pure ecstasy.

The following conversation between Narendra and Mahendra, a lay disciple of the Master, gives an idea of Naren's mental condition at the time:

Narendra: "Last Sunday (2nd January, 1886), I was meditating here. Suddenly I felt a strange creeping sensation in the chest."

Mahendra: "It was the awakening of the Kundalini."

Narendra: "Probably so. I clearly felt Idâ and Pingalâ, and asked Hazra to put his hand on my chest. Yesterday I saw Sri Ramakrishna upstairs and said, 'Everyone has been blessed with some sort of realisation. Let me, too, have something. When all have got it, shall I alone be left out?' He said, 'Make some arrangements for your family, and you shall have all. What do you want?' I said, 'I wish to remain immersed in Samâdhi for three or four days at a stretch,—breaking it just to take food.' He said, 'You are a fool. There is a state higher than that even. Do you not sing—"Thou art all that there is?" Come here after making some provision for your family, and you shall realise a state even higher than Samâdhi.'

"This morning I went home. They took me to task for neglecting my studies when I should be busy preparing myself for my examination. I went to study at my grandmother's house. But as I was about to begin, I was seized with a sort of dread, as if it were a most horrible thing to read! A struggle raged in my heart. I never wept like that in my life! Then leaving my books and all, I ran here. My shoes slipped off somewhere on the road. I was running past a rick of straw and some fibres flew out and stuck to my body! I ran and ran till I reached here."

That very night at about nine o'clock, inspite of the aggravation of his complaint, the Master spoke in whispers or by signs of Narendra. He said, "Look at the wonderful state of Narendra! There was a time when he did not believe in the Personal aspect of God. Now see how he pants for realisation!" Then he gave a hint that Naren was soon to reach the goal. That very night Naren with some of his brother disciples left for Dakshineswar to practise meditation.

There was nothing unnatural in Naren's request. It is the heartfelt desire and ambition of every sincere Sâdhaka of all ages and climes to feel the ecstasy of merging himself in God. Samâdhi is the culmination of spirituality. But Naren was born for the fulfilment of a higher and greater purpose. He was to be not only a Siddha-purusha—a perfect soul—but a saviour of souls as well. He was not only to cross the ocean of Mâyâ himself, but to help others to do so. From that standpoint individual liberation was destined for Naren to be comparatively insignificant. Sri Ramakrishna was fully aware of this as was shown by his telling Naren that he would make him realise a higher and nobler state than Samâdhi. He wanted

Naren to be a Jnâni and a Bhakta in one, to see God in His various forms as well as in the Absolute State.

On another day the Master asked, "Why do you not continue your college studies?" The young disciple replied with emotion, "Sir, I would feel relieved if I could find a drug by taking which I might forget for all time all that I have learnt." All this time Naren was practising many austerities and meditating a great deal, spending night after night under the Panchavati before a Dhuni fire. The Master had initiated him into various paths of spiritual discipline and in carrying out these injunctions Naren attained remarkable results. Sri Ramakrishna was silently preparing him to be the head of the group of young monks who were to consecrate their lives in the near future to carrying out his mission on this earth. One day the Master expressly commissioned him to look after the young devotees, saying, "I leave them to your care. See that they practise spiritual exercises even after my passing away and that they do not return home."

One day, in preparation for the prospective monastic life, the Master commanded the young boys to beg food from door to door. They consented immediately with enthusiasm; and with the name of the Lord upon their lips they went forth to beg in the neighbourhood. They had varied experiences; some were abused for neglecting their duties; the sight of others caused many mothers to shed tears. The food which they collected in this manner was cooked in the garden and offered to the Master, who was overjoyed. He took a grain of rice and said, "Well done! This food is very pure." He knew that soon these young boys would put on the ochre robe of renunciation and go forth empty handed in quest of

God, begging what food was necessary from pious householders.

It is interesting to see how the Master was strengthening the bonds between himself and his disciples. Naren, of course, was the central figure. He was looked up to because of Sri Ramakrishna's high estimate of his spiritual worth. Then, too, he was the most intellectual of them all. He had combined reason and secular knowledge with his devotional nature, besides being more strongly fortified in his religious convictions. When the Master's teaching and the monastic tendencies of himself and his fellow disciples were challenged, his explanations were irresistibly logical. And in speaking for himself, he spoke for his fellow disciples. It was he who fired them with a great enthusiasm by the power of his remarkable personality. Did any differences or difficulties arise they would come to him for their solution. Sri Ramakrishna encouraged this in innumerable ways. He told them all that Naren was their leader, and made them feel that the spiritual understanding of his chief disciple should be their infallible guide in the days that were to come. And many of the disciples did understand the Master the better through Naren. He explained that great life to them. His understanding of the Master was their understanding and strength.

In the midst of all his strivings and hankerings for the realisation of Truth, he never lost sight of his Master, but remembered that it was he who, through his infinite grace, was preparing him for the realisation of God. The Master was his friend, philosopher and Guru, all in one. The Master's illness was constantly on his mind. One day, about this time, Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani, a great Hindu scholar and a devotee of the Master, came to Cossipore. In course of the conversation, the Pandit said, "Sir, it is written in the scriptures that perfect souls like you can cure any physical malady by a mere wish. If you would but concentrate your mind on the affected part, determined that it shall be cured, the cure will take place. Why don't you try it, sir?" Sri Ramakrishna replied without a moment's hesitation, "You are a scholar and yet you make such a senseless proposal! I have given my mind once for all to God. How is it possible for me to take it away and concentrate it upon this cage of rotten flesh and blood?" The Pandit was silenced. After he had left Naren and a few disciples begged the Master to heal himself saying, "Sir, you must get rid of this disease, at least for our sake."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Do you think that I undergo this suffering voluntarily? I would like to see it cured. But it is still there. Everything depends upon the sweet will of the Divine Mother."

Naren: "Then, please tell the Mother to cure you. She cannot but listen to your prayer."

Sri Ramakrishna: "It is easy for you to talk like that. But I can never say such things."

Naren: "But that will not do. You must tell the Mother about it, at least for our sake."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Very well. Let me see what can be done."

After a few hours, Naren came back and said, "Did you ask the Mother about it? What was Her reply?" The Master said, "I said to Her, pointing to my throat, 'I cannot eat anything on account of a sore here. Please see that I may eat a little.' The Mother replied, pointing to you all, 'Why, are you not eating through so many mouths!' I was so ashamed that I could not utter another word."

Naren was startled at these words. What an absence of body-consciousness! What a firm realisation of the Truth of Advaita! Naren knew then that his Master was really unique in his realisations.

Meditation was becoming a fixed habit with Naren and manifested itself outwardly in the power to plunge the mind into the deepest concentration upon any subject. Naren was now sensing spiritual powers within him. He knew moments when he literally touched divinity and was made physically conscious of Reality by the spiritual transfiguration of the functions and faculties of the senses. His thought became a sweeping power. And on one occasion he displayed this:

It was in March of 1886. Naren was seated with three or four brother disciples in a room in the Cossipore garden on the night of the Sivarâtri. They had fasted the whole day and intended to spend the night in meditation, worship and prayer. A mild shower of rain fell in the evening and small patches of fleecy clouds spread over the star-lit sky. The worship of the first part of the night finished, Naren was talking with his brother disciples. For one reason or another the different devotees left the room and Naren was left alone with Kali (subsequently Swami Abhedânanda). Suddenly he desired to test on Kali his power to transmit a certain high consciousness of the Advaita Vedânta which he himself possessed. He said to Kali, "After a few minutes, touch me." When a brother disciple re-entered the room he found Narendra and Kali seated in a meditative posture. Presently Kali touched Naren's right knee with his right hand, which began to tremble. After a minute or two, Naren said to Kali, "All right. How did you feel!" "I felt," replied Kali, "a shock as though from an electric battery." The third disciple asked, "Kali, was it Naren's touch that made your hand shake?" "Yes," Kali answered, "I could not keep my hand steady though I tried."

After finishing the midnight worship, the young men again sat for meditation. Kali this time became absorbed in deep meditation, quite unconscious of the outer world. Those present concluded that it was all due to Naren's touch. When the worship was finished Naren went to see the Master. As he entered the room, the Master said, "Well, you are frittering away your power before you have accumulated enough. Gather it first and then you will understand how much of it you should spend and in what way. Mother will let you know. Do you understand what great harm you have done to that boy by infusing your idea into him? He had been following a particular line for a long time. All is spoilt now. Well, let bygones be bygones. Never do it again. However, the boy is lucky." Naren was totally dumbfounded. Sri Ramakrishna knew, although he was in his room, what was going on in the garden. Naren kept silent at the Master's reproof.

Sri Ramakrishna was sinking daily. The anxiety and grief of the devotees knew no bounds. They redoubled their efforts to serve him. The young men made Cossipore garden their home much to the chagrin of their guardians. The householders defrayed all expenses most ungrudgingly. All felt that the chief support of their life was going to be taken away. The sight of the hæmorrhage would send a thrill of horror into their hearts. But the Master, in the midst of all sufferings, looked as cheerful as ever, for he recognised the benign hand of the Divine Mother behind all this. When the pain became unbearable, he would whisper with a smile, "Let the body and the pain take care of each other, thou, oh my mind, be always in bliss!" One night he whispered to Mahendra, "I am bearing all this because otherwise you would be weeping. If you all say that it is better that the body should go rather than suffer so, let it go." To other devotees he said, "The disease is naturally of the body. I see many forms of the Lord, and this (his own form), too, is one of them."

Next morning (March 15, 1886) the Master felt a little better. He was talking with the devotees in whispers or by signs. Naren, Rakhal, Mahendra and a few others who were present appeared very gloomy and depressed.

Sri Ramakrishna: "Do you know what I see? It is He who has become all this. Men and animals that I see appear to be but frameworks coated with skin and through them He is moving the head and limbs! As I once saw in a vision, all—the garden, houses, roads, men and cattle,—everything made of wax, composed of the same substance!

"I see that He Himself has become the executioner, the victim and the sacrificial post!"

As he said this he fell into Samâdhi and lost all outward consciousness. Returning partially from that state, he said, "Now I have no pain—I am perfectly at ease!"

The disciples were startled to find how he could so easily detach himself from the body-idea and go beyond all relative pleasure and pain. Looking at Latu, the Master said, "There sits Latu, leaning his head upon his hand. It seems to me as if the Lord is seated in that posture."

As he cast his eyes upon the disciples, he appeared to melt in love. Like a mother, he began to caress Rakhal and Naren and said to Mahendra, "Had this body been allowed to last a little longer, many more people would have been spiritually awakened." He paused a little, and said, "But that is not the wish of the Mother." Repeating the same sentence he said, "No, the Mother has ordained otherwise. Lest people should take advantage of my simplicity and illiteracy, and prevail upon me to bestow upon them the rare gifts of spirituality, She will take me away. And this is an age when devotional exercises are at a sad discount."

Rakhal (tenderly): "Please ask Her to let your body last."

Sri Ramakrishna: "That depends upon Her will."

Narendra: "Your will has become one with Hers."

Sri Ramakrishna paused for a minute and said, "I now see that my will is entirely merged in Hers."

The devotees sat silent. Sri Ramakrishna tenderly gazed upon them and said:

"Here (*i.e.*, within him) are two personalities. One is God and the other is His devotee. It is the latter who broke his arm and who is ill. Do you understand?"

The devotees kept quiet. The Master added, "Alas! To whom shall I tell this and who will understand me?" After a pause, "He comes as a man—as an Incarnation. He brings His devotees with Him. The devotees again return with Him."

Rakhal: "So you must not leave us behind."

Sri Ramakrishna (smiling): "A band of minstrels suddenly appear before a house. They sing and dance, and go away as suddenly as they came,—nobody knows them!"

After a short pause he resumed: "Pain is unavoidable so long as there is form. Therefore, I sometimes wish that I may not have to assume this form again. But still there is the other side of the shield. Through the body one may taste divine bliss. Otherwise everything appears insipid. After going to feasts repeatedly one does not enjoy the humdrum food at home. That the Lord takes on a form is for the sake of His devotees." Looking affectionately at Naren, the Master gave him some instructions about Pure Knowledge and the state of a man after realisation.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Naren): "Always discriminate as to whether you are body, mind or intellect. Try to discover your real nature. The real Self is unattached. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the three qualities. But It is not attached to any of these."

Naren: "Yes, sir."

Sri Ramakrishna: "It is beyond qualities; beyond ignorance. Lust and gold is Mâyâ. Knowledge, renunciation and devotion—these are the divine attributes of Mâyâ. Though you and other devotees are anxious about me through some attachment, yet it does not bring bondage to the soul. It leads to the highest realisation of the Self. Even after realisation some retain relationship with Mâyâ—I mean its divine attributes to serve as a teacher to mankind and to taste the felicity of divine relationship with God and His devotees."

Naren: "Some get cross with me when I advocate the need of renunciation."

Sri Ramakrishna (in a whisper): "One must renounce. (Pointing to his limbs) Suppose one thing is placed under another. If you want to take the former, won't you remove the latter? Can you get at that without removing this one?"

Naren: "Quite so."

Sri Ramakrishna: "When you see everything saturated with That, can you see anything else?"

Naren: "Must one renounce the world?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "As I said, if you see everything saturated with That, can you see anything else —family or the like?"

The Master was looking at Naren most tenderly. Addressing the devotees, he said, "Capital!" Naren asked with a smile, "What do you mean by that?" The Master replied smiling, "You are swiftly progressing towards renunciation." Rakhal said, "Naren now appreciates you thoroughly." To which the Master replied, "Yes, and many others too do the same." Then to Naren and others he said, "I now realise that everything has come out of this." He asked Naren if he had understood the meaning of that. Naren said, "All created things have come out of you." Sri Ramakrishna was delighted and said to Rakhal: "Do you see! He has understood!"

This remarkable conversation was illuminating to Naren in many respects. He had come to the Master with many doubts, regarding the very existence of God, His nature and the Incarnations. The Master, at first, tried to convince Naren through his intellect. Therefore, he propounded to him the theory of Advaita Vedânta which makes an irresistible appeal to reason. Naren assimilated this idea quickly but longed to go on to the vision of Brahman, beyond name and form and all relative settings. He wanted to realise the Self in Samâdhi. The Master promised to take him to a higher plane than that,— to the realisation that Brahman not only transcends the universe, but is also immanent in it. All that exists is Brahman. The aspirant reaches a high stage of illumination when he realises the universe as the manifestation of Truth, the relative as only another phase of the Absolute. The man of highest realisation passes easily from one state to the other. Naren now realised that it is possible for the same transcendental Truth to embody Itself in a human form, and that to know the Incarnation is to know the Absolute. To see the Son is to see the Father. And no one can see the Father except through the Son. To embrace the universe after transcending it is the last divine sacrifice. Naren saw Sri Ramakrishna in a new light. He further realised that the paths of Devotion and Knowledge lead to the same goal, that Love is the culmination of Realisation, the Jacob's ladder through which the man of realisation connects the Absolute with the relative.

At one time the sole topic of discussion and meditation among the disciples in their leisure hours was the career and gospel of Lord Buddha, the Enlightened One. The main speaker and the inspirer was of course Naren. He had saturated himself with Buddhistic lore. For the time he was a Buddhist in spirit. The towering intellect of the Enlightened One, the eminent sanity of his views, his uncompromising demand for Truth, his burning renunciation, his compassionate heart, his sweet, deep and luminous personality, his sublime morality, and the manner in which he struck the balance between metaphysics and human character—all these had aroused tremendous enthusiasm in Naren. He forgot everything else for the time being. Naren's enthusiasm was contagious and spread to the other disciples. They were all determined, like Buddha, to realise Truth even at the sacrifice of life itself. They inscribed in bold characters upon the wall of the meditation room, "Let my body dry up, as it were, on this seat; let the flesh thereof and the bones sink into dissolution; without realising that Enlightenment which is difficult to attain even in aeons, this body shall not rise from its seat."

Instinctively Naren's mind turned to Buddha Gayâ, the place of the Tathâgata's illumination, where these pregnant words were uttered, and he determined to go there and meditate under the sacred Bo-tree. He confided this only to Tarak and Kali. Tarak arranged for the passage money, and about the beginning of the month of April in the year 1886, Naren with Tarak and Kali crossed the Ganges for the Railway station at Bâlly. Since they left no information as to their journey their friends became very anxious, thinking that they might have renounced the world to take up the life of the wandering monk and that they might never return. Subsequently it was learned that the three boys had gone to Buddha Gaya, dressed in Geruâ, to practise austerities.

The three friends alighted at Gaya and walked seven miles to the place of Buddha's illumination. The wonderful solitude of the place and its sweet associations gladdened their hearts beyond expectation. One evening when all was silent and hushed they repaired to the stone seat under the sacred Bodhi tree and sat in meditation. The silence of the evening hour and the solemnity of his thought stirred the depths of Naren's emotional nature. Suddenly he burst into tears, and putting his arm about Tarak seated next to him, he embraced him with wonderful tenderness. Startled, Tarak asked him the reason for this demonstration. Naren said that as he meditated, the sublime character of Buddha, his wonderful compassion, his humane teachings, and the subsequent history of India transformed by the magic wand of Buddhism—all these presented themselves before his vision in such glowing colours, like pictures seen in a kaleidoscope, that he could not control his feelings.

In the meantime at Cossipore the boys missed Naren so much that some of them were determined to follow him. When this was reported to the Master, he said, "Why are you so anxious? Where will he go? How long will he be able to stay away? He will be back in no time." Then he added with a smile, "Go round the world, and you will find that true religion does not exist anywhere. Whatever of spirituality there is, it is all here" (pointing to his own body). The word "here" which the Master used may be taken in two ways. He might have meant that real spirituality as realised and manifested in his own life could not be found anywhere else, or he might have wished to point out that mere wanderings about are of no avail unless accompanied with the realisation of Truth within. Sri Ramakrishna knew that Naren had perceived something in him (the Master) which he would not find elsewhere and that that alone would ensure his speedy return. And the Master rejoiced, for he felt in the depth of his insight that Naren would understand him and his worth all the better from his experiences elsewhere, like the bird of his parable which flew back to its roost on the mast of a ship after flying fruitlessly for miles and miles in search of a better one. Sri Ramakrishna knew that Naren would be glad to return to him.

Naren and his companions stayed three or four days at Buddha Gaya as guests of the Mahant of the temple. At the end of that time they began to feel a desire to see the Master again. Part of the passage money was obtained from the Mahant and they came to Gaya town, where Naren met an old acquaintance of his father, a practising lawyer of Gaya, who invited the three young monks to a soirèe at his home. The invitation was accepted and Naren added to the enjoyment of the evening by singing a number of songs. The remainder of the passage money was contributed by the kindly host, and soon they were back to the

Cossipore garden. The Master was overjoyed to see his beloved Naren and made him tell all that he had seen, heard, felt and thought at Buddha Gaya.

Naren was indelibly impressed with what he had seen and realised there, and for some days could talk of nothing else. One day, on the 9th of April, 1886, shortly after his return, he had the following conversation with the Master and his brother disciples.

Sri Ramakrishna (to Mahendra): "Naren had been to Buddha Gaya."

Mahendra (to Naren): "What is the philosophy of Buddha?"

Naren: "He could not express in words what he had realised; therefore people call him an atheist."

Sri Ramakrishna (by signs): "Why should he be an atheist? No, he was not an atheist. Only he could not express his realisation in words. Do you know the meaning of the word Buddha? It means that by thinking of Consciousness, one becomes Consciousness Itself."

Naren: "Yes, sir. There are three classes of Buddhas,—Buddha, Arhat and Budhisattva."

Sri Ramakrishna: "This is also the play of God—a new sport. How could Buddha be an atheist? The state of being conscious of one's Self cannot be described as existence or non-existence."

Naren (to Mahendra): "Here contradictions meet. Oxygen and hydrogen constitute water; again they produce the oxy-hydrogen flame. In this Buddha state both work and inactivity are perfectly possible—I mean selfless work. Worldly people, those who are engrossed in sense-objects, speak of the world as existence; again those who believe in the theory of Mâyâ speak of it as non-existence. The Buddha state is neither existence nor non-existence."

Sri Ramakrishna (to Naren): "What does Buddha say?"

Naren: "He did not speak about the existence of God. But he exhibited mercy towards all. A hawk was going to devour a bird which was its prey and Buddha offered his own flesh in place of the victim's. What renunciation! The son of a king, he renounced everything! There is nothing wonderful in the renunciation of a man who has no possessions.

"After becoming enlightened and realising Nirvâna, he at once returned to the ancestral home and requested his wife, his child and many of the royal family to embrace the life of monasticism. What a great renunciation! But contrast it with the conduct of Vyâsadeva. He prevented Sukadeva, his son, from renouncing the world and advised him to practise religion at home. Buddha did not believe in power or anything of the kind. He spoke only of the annihilation of desires. He sat for meditation under a tree and said, 'Let this body dry up here,' *i.e.*, let me die on this spot if I cannot attain to Nirvâna. This body is a great rogue. Nothing can be achieved without controlling it."

Sasi: "Why then do you say that meat produces the quality of Sattva? You advocate meat-eating, don't you?"

Naren: "Yes. I do. But I can also live on rice alone, even without salt."

Sri Ramakrishna (to Naren): "Well, you find here (meaning his own self) everything, don't you? It is like a grocer's shop which keeps everything, even the smallest tit-bit."

Naren: "Yes, sir, having attained all these states you keep yourself, as it were, at a lower level."

Sri Ramakrishna: "Yes, it is, as if someone keeps me there."

Picking up his fan the Master said, "When I realised God, He was as tangible as this fan. Furthermore, I saw that God and that which resides in this body (pointing to himself) are one and the same thing."

Naren said, "The perfected soul attains his own liberation, but retains the sense of 'I' and 'mine' and suffers from the pain and pleasure of the body for the redemption of humanity. We work on compulsion; it is like coolie's work. He does it for the fun of the thing."

The few days that were left to Sri Ramakrishna on this plane were memorable ones for the disciples. One day, Gopal Senior, one of the disciples, brought some Geruâ clothes and Rudrâksha beads to the Master for distribution among Sâdhus. The Master said, "Here are boys full of renunciation. You won't be able to find better monks anywhere. Distribute the clothes and beads amongst them." One evening he called the boys, the future apostles of the Ramakrishna Order and put them through a certain ceremony. Thereafter they were permitted to take food from all irrespective of caste and creed. The Master himself initiated these boys as monks, fulfilling their heart's desire. Thus was sown the seed of the future Ramakrishna Order, which was to grow and develop into a mighty organisation.

Now, we come to the greatest moment of Naren's Sâdhanâ, the very crest and glory of his spiritual realisations. Ever since the Master had initiated him into the intellectual and spiritual awareness of the Advaita Vedânta, he was pining for a vision of the Absolute. He prayed to feel Divinity; to have the whole of Nature erased from the tablets of perception. To lose the 'I' in order to plunge into the Region of True Being which is even beyond thought

—such was Naren's prayer to Sri Ramakrishna. Naren wanted to realise the very spirit of the Upanishads and be able to say from experience that which is the last utterance of the human soul and the first note of Divine Consciousness—"Aham Brahmâsmi," —I am Brahman!

Naren had teased the Master for this realisation but to no avail. One evening however it came unexpectedly. He was meditating, when suddenly he felt a light at the back of his head, as if a torch-light had been placed there. It became more and more brilliant, larger and larger and finally seemed to burst. His mind became merged in it. What transpired then in his consciousness was beyond words, for that Absolute State is beyond description. Afterwards he wrote some verses,—"The Hymn of Samâdhi,"—which best illustrate that exalted condition. It was all still and quiet in the room where Naren and Gopal Senior were meditating. Suddenly Gopal heard Naren cry out, "Gopaldâ, Gopaldâ, where is my body?" In partially descending from that state Naren had consciousness only of his head; his body seemed lost. "Why, Naren, it is there, it is there," answered Gopal startled beyond description as he looked at Naren's rigid body. He then hastened for help to Sri Ramakrishna and found him in a state of intense calm, his countenance deeply serious as though he knew what was happening in the next room. In reply to Gopal's demand for aid for Naren he said, "Let him stay in that state for a while. He has teased me long enough for it."

About nine o'clock at night Naren began to show faint signs of returning consciousness. When he regained full consciousness of the physical world he found himself surrounded by his anxious brother disciples. Memory came back. He felt as though he were bathed in ineffable peace. His heart was full to overflowing with ecstasy. He realised that the Absolute of Vedânta alone could reconcile all philosophies. When he presented himself to the Master, the latter said, looking deep into his eyes, "Now then, the Mother has shown you everything. Just as a treasure is locked up in a box, so will this realisation you have just had be locked up and the key shall remain with me. You have work to do. When you will have finished my work, the treasure-box will be unlocked again; and you will know everything then just as you do now." He warned him to be careful of his body for some time, and to exercise the utmost discretion in his choice of food and companions, accepting only the purest.

Afterwards Sri Ramakrishna said to the other disciples, "Naren will pass away only of his own will. The moment he realises who he is, he will refuse to stay a moment longer in the body. The time will come when he will shake the world to its foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers! I have prayed that the Divine Mother may keep this realisation of the Absolute veiled from Naren. There is much work to be done by him. But this veil is so very thin that it may give way at any time." It was Naren's intense desire to realise the absolute Brahman that decided Sri Ramakrishna to give it to him. But the Master had no intention of permitting him to stay there. As Naren's work was to be in the sphere of compassion and service to humanity, he could not remain in Nirvikalpa Samâdhi if he was to do it. It is only a Ramakrishna who is able to come from and go to the Absolute at will, and even he assured his return to ordinary consciousness by creating some desire, of the simplest and most childlike nature before going into Samâdhi and repeating it insistently so that there was nothing left to chance. He would say, "I—I—I shall smoke," "I shall have water to drink."

The days passed in devotion, in service, in sorrow, in ecstasy, Naren leading, the others following. But few days were left before the soul of Sri Ramakrishna would pass into Nirvâna, the Infinite Realisation. The time was near at hand when the light of this great life was to become extinct, to escape from the cage of the body. The disciples were untiring in their attention in spite of sleepless nights and busy days. What did it matter if their own bodies succumbed in his service? In August of the year 1886, people came and went by scores; it seemed as if everyone who had ever known the Master felt that the end was drawing near.

It was two years and six months since the Master had bound Naren over to the Mother, an event for which Sri Ramakrishna had waited for many years; for after giving over the whole treasure of his realisations he would be free to depart. Naren used to say, later on, "From the time that he gave me over to the Mother, he retained his vigour of body only six months. The rest of the time he suffered." Indeed, the power of the Master was being diverted into a new channel,—into Naren who had been prepared for this by more than four years of spiritual training. Naren, at this time, was meditating with great intensity. One day he and Girish Babu sat under a tree to meditate. There were mosquitoes without number there which disturbed Girish so much that he became restless. On opening his eyes he was amazed to see that Naren's body was covered as if with a dark blanket, so vast was the number of mosquitoes upon him. But Naren was quite unconscious of them and had no recollection of these when he returned to his normal state.

Towards the close of the month of July the malady in the Master's throat had made such progress that he could speak only in a whisper, or else make his wishes known by signs. The disciples were grief-stricken that he, their father, their guide, he who loved them all as a mother loves her children, who had borne patiently with them, and had given up his own life for them, was sinking daily. Often, the Master would call the young disciples to his side, caressing them lovingly, speaking eloquently by means of signs of the love he bore them. His constant thought was, "What will become of them without me?" But there was Naren!

It so happened that Naren had been called to the side of the Master some days earlier, when he was suffering intensely and could scarcely speak. The Master wrote on a piece of paper, "Narendra will teach others." Naren hesitated and said, "I won't do that." But the Master replied, "You shall have to do it." Some time before he had told Naren, "My Siddhis (powers) will manifest through you in time," meaning thereby that Naren in later years, as a teacher, would in a miraculous way turn many of the most worldly-minded to the spiritual life.

Verily, Naren was the rock of Vedânta and the Master singled him out as the one upon whom to build the structure of the Modern Gospel of the Eternal Religion as he himself had realised it. Naren was overcome with emotion. A feeling of utmost humility came over him, commingled with poignant grief, for, in a way, it was an assurance from the Master's own lips that the time for the Great Deliverance was close at hand.

Now that the last days were approaching, the Master set himself with greater energy than ever to mould, in a calm and silent way, the spiritual life of these boys, particularly that of Naren. Every evening he would call Naren to his room and for two or three hours at a time would impart final instructions to him on various spiritual subjects and advise him to keep his brother disciples together, how to guide and train them so that they would be able to live the life of renunciation.

It was now only three or four days before the Master's Mahâsamâdhi. Sri Ramakrishna called Naren to him. Looking steadfastly at him he entered into deep meditation. Naren felt as if a subtle force, resembling an electric shock, were entering his body, and he lost all outer consciousness. When he came to, he found the Master weeping. Wondering Naren asked Sri Ramakrishna why he wept, and was told, "Oh Naren, today I have given you my all and have become a Fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me great things will be done by you; only after that will you go to whence you came." Naren suddenly became the possessor of all the spiritual wealth of his Guru, acquired by years of superhuman effort and at the cost of terrible austerities. Sri Ramakrishna willingly deprived himself of his powers in order that Naren might be endowed with spiritual omnipotence. When that which was Ramakrishna had completed its task in its human Incarnation and manifestation, it gave itself wholly and entirely to Naren, as one gives a flower or bestows a gift, for the good of the world.

A couple of days before the final Mahâsamâdhi of the Master, as Naren was standing by his bed-side, a curious thought flashed across his mind, "He has said many times that he is an Incarnation of God. If I can make him say now as he is in the throes of death, in the midst of human anguish and physical pain, 'I am God incarnate,' then I will believe him!"

The moment this thought came to him, the Master turned towards him and summoning all his energy said distinctly, "O my Naren, are you not yet convinced? He who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna in this body,—but not from the standpoint of your Vedânta!" Naren was stricken with remorse and shame for having doubted, even for a moment, after so many revelations.

The last two days were sad ones for the disciples. They knew that all would soon be over, and that they would be left fatherless in the darkness of the world. The Master's suffering on the last day was intense. The physician was summoned but was unable to do anything. A little before dusk the Master complained of difficulty in breathing. Suddenly he entered into Samâdhi. It was rather of an unusual kind. Some of the disciples began to weep. After midnight, Sri Ramakrishna regained consciousness of the physical world and said that he was hungry. He ate a small quantity of porridge and seemed better. Leaning against five or six pillows supported by Sasi he talked up to the last moment with Naren, and gave him his last counsel in a low voice. Then uttering thrice the name of Kâli he lay gently back on the bed. Suddenly, at two minutes past one, of the 16th of August, 1886, a thrill passed through the Master's body, the hair stood on end, the eyes became fixed on the tip of the nose, a divine smile lit up the face and the Master entered into trance, the Mahâsamâdhi from which he never returned to this mortal plane of existence. The curtain fell on a great spiritual life. The immortal spirit, so long confined in a physical casement, burst through its limitations of name and form, and became one with the Infinite Spirit. The barriers of time and space were broken and he who had been the light and guide of a few souls, now became a spiritual beacon for the whole universe. Though the disciples knew all this yet they were overwhelmed with grief. The more they looked upon the pallid face and rigid body of the Master, the more they wept. They felt themselves like helpless orphans; that benign smile would greet them no more, that radiant face would no longer console them; the sweet words of peace and benedictions were hushed for ever; those lips which had spoken innumerable words of love and blessings were now sealed in death. They were stupefied.

The cot upon which the Master lay was brought down in the morning, the body was wrapt in ochre robes and adorned with sandal paste and flowers. For some time it stood in the ground of the Cossipore garden-house—the home of so many sweet, never-to-be-forgotten memories. Then a procession was formed, and to the sound of devotional music it was taken to the cremation ground at Baranagore, some distance away. The disciples and devotees were in tears. All took turns in carrying the beloved burden of the Master's form. Many of the spectators bowed before it.

At the ghat the body of the Master was tenderly laid upon the pyre prepared for it. The pyre was lighted; incense and clarified butter were poured upon it, and in a couple of hours, everything was finished.

In the midst of this terrible grief, a spirit of calm resignation suddenly descended upon the heart of the disciples. Was he really gone? He who sacrificed his life for their welfare, could he have left them for ever? No, was not he, their Lord, the Soul of their souls, the same even in death as in life? If they were to believe his own words, he had simply passed from one chamber to another. Bereavement was transformed into ecstasy they had so often felt while the Master was in the body.

The ashes and other remains of the body were collected and put into an urn. Slowly and heavily they retraced their steps and entered the garden-house of Cossipore shouting "Jay Ramakrishna!"—"Victory to Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna!"

XII

THE BARANAGORE MATH

The scene shifts from the burning-ghat to the Ramakrishna monastery at Bârânagore after a few days' sojourn at Cossipore, where the boys stayed until the lease expired. The young disciples are now seen garbed in the ochre robes of the monk and grouped together as the Brotherhood of Sri Ramakrishna, with Narendra as the leader. The relics of the Master are now reposed in the monastery in a room set apart for the purpose, where religious services before the picture of Sri Ramakrishna are conducted. The boys faced the direst poverty, but it had no terrors for them. So wrapt were they in their desire to follow the injunctions of the Master that, forgetting sleep, they spent night after night in prayer and spiritual exercises. Naren spurred them on to burning renunciation and intense devotion. After passing through the travail of a new birth, after answering the challenges of internal and external nature, these young disciples emerged as apostles of a new Dispensation.

Narendra Nath's pathway to the place where he became the world-renowned Swami Vivekananda was not an easy one. He had to face starvation and intense physical as well as mental agony, and undergo the pain of martyrdom before he gained acknowledgment from the world. The boy who acquired spiritual power and realisation became the saint and the prophet who distributed the fruits of realisation and translated personal power into impersonal service. Naren, the disciple, became Swami Vivekananda—the teacher. He who sat at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna is now the master of numerous devotees and disciples. He, who as the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna sought for spiritual power, becomes himself the focus of a contagious spirituality. Narendra Nath Datta is transformed into the monk Vivekananda and the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna pervades him. And yet, as the few following chapters will show, this was not the work of a day or a month. It was a gradual process. There was no miracle in it. The story is intensely human and of the greatest interest to all seekers after Truth.

From now on, one is ushered into a world where the untiring energy of the great soul of Swami Vivekananda is made manifest through a tremendous will, which builds and expands his life-work to vast spiritual proportions. Here we see suffering and the meeting with and overcoming of difficulties. One is brought face to face with a powerful, fiery and yet most human personality whose presence is suggestive of the great peace beyond the strife of life. There is laughter and sweet human sentiment as well, for he enjoyed life and was filled with a joyous sense of humour and fun and light-heartedness. In his heart he was always the boy of Dakshineswar. But one never knew when some revelation of the supreme illumination of his thought and the great depth of his spirituality, some sudden transition from fun to spiritual illumination, from the heights of thought to the joyousness of laughter, would come. And yet he was always the monk, the prophet, the teacher. It was as if his soul was constantly with God, and his thought and love always in the service of man.

The death of Mahâpurushas, whilst productive of great sorrow, creates a great urge towards the attainment of the highest ideals. So it was with the devotees and disciples after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna.

They were overwhelmed with a powerful desire to attain the most exalted consciousness and they found themselves strengthened by the knowledge that the work of the Man of Dakshineswar was not to end with the death of the body; that it was to express itself in an eternal flow of spiritual life and knowledge of the Indestructible. And the channels of this flow were to be the hearts of the devotees and the souls of these young men who at the touch of Sri Ramakrishna felt the utter evanescence of the world. After the Mahâsamâdhi of the Master, the disciples were at first too bewildered to know what to do. The passing of the Master, though long expected in a sense, was yet unexpected in another; and their grief knew no bounds.

Meanwhile there was still a month before the agreement for the house at Cossipore would expire. Tarak, Latu and Gopal Senior had already given up their homes and were living there. The other young men came daily to spend most of the time in meditation, song and conversation. The topic was only one,—their great Master. Here in this very house in which he had lived, they recalled over and over again his last days and the memorable days of Dakshineswar; here Naren entertained them with thrilling tales of the Master's life, and his mission and teachings, until they were filled with ecstasy. A great spirit filled the whole place and throbbed with wonderful vitality and power.

Another experience that Naren could never forget was his vision of Sri Ramakrishna the week after his death. One night, Naren and a brother disciple named Harish were standing beside the little pond of the garden-house of Cossipore, talking, no doubt, of that loss of which their hearts at the moment were so full. It was about eight o'clock. Suddenly, as they stood there, Naren saw a shining form covered with cloth coming slowly towards them up the drive from the gate. Could it be the Master? He kept quiet, fearing that he was a victim of a hallucination, when suddenly he heard his companion say in a hoarse whisper, "What is that?" At this, Naren called loudly, "Who is there?" At the sound of his voice, others came hurriedly from the house to see what was happening. But they were too late: when the phantom came to a thick jasmine bush within ten yards of where the two were standing, it vanished. Lanterns were brought out, and every nook and corner of the garden was searched, but nothing could be found. The vision left a profound impression on Naren. It may be mentioned here that after the passing of the Master, the Holy Mother, following the custom of Hindu widows, was about to remove her bracelets and put on the insignia of widowhood, when Sri Ramakrishna suddenly appeared before her and forbade her to do so. "I am not dead," he said. After that vision the Holy Mother to the last day of her life wore gold bracelets on her wrists and used a red-bordered cloth. On other occasions too, she was blessed with similar visions of the Master.

Following the cremation of the Master's body, his ashes had been gathered together and placed in a copper receptacle. This was kept in the room the Master had occupied during his last illness. It was agreed between the householder devotees and the young disciples that the ashes would be kept at the Cossipore garden-house for about a month and then removed to a place on the bank of the Ganges. But owing to lack of money they could not purchase the plot of land, and the householders headed by Ram Chandra Datta, Devendra Nath Mazumdar and Nityagopal demanded the ashes in order to bury them in a retreat built by Ram Babu at Kânkurgâchi, a suburb of Calcutta. The boys refused and a dispute arose, characterised by much intensity of feeling and high words. Of the boys, Sasi and Niranjan had constituted themselves guardians and protectors of the Master's relics. They were giants, the one in resolution, the other in appearance, and they held themselves ready to stand their ground at any cost. In this dilemma, Naren was appealed to. He said, "Brothers, be reasonable! Let it not be said that the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna fought over his remains! Let them have the ashes! Let us mould our lives according to our Master's teachings. If we are true to his ideals, if we live up to them, we have done more than merely worshipping the relics." Accordingly a day was appointed to give the ashes to the householders. But on the eve of this occasion Narendra bethought himself, "But certainly they cannot have the whole of the Master's relics. We shall give them only the ashes!" And to his brother disciples he said, "Please bring the copper pot." They did so, and at Naren's command opened the receptacle and took out the bigger bones. Naren and his brother disciples then swallowed a minute portion of the relics and as a result had deep meditation that night. The householder devotees, unaware of what had happened, received the receptacle containing the ashes from the disciples, who taking turns carried it on their heads to Kankurgachi, where it was buried with proper ceremonies. Sasi's eyes were filled with tears as he saw the ground stamped down over the Master's ashes; afterwards he said, "It seemed as if they were hammering and crushing the very heart out of us!" Later an altar and a temple were erected upon this spot, which came to be known as the Yogodyân, or the Retreat of

Yoga, and every year a celebration is held in honour of Sri Ramakrishna. The relics which the monks retained were sealed in an urn which was kept at Balarâm Babu's house in Calcutta. The Holy Mother, shortly after, set out on a pilgrimage for Vrindâvan and took the pot with her. Daily she performed her rites of worship before it, feeling therein the presence of the Master. Portions of the relics were sent to Hardwâr and other sacred places to be consigned to the Ganges according to the custom of the Hindus. A year later on her return she gave the urn of relics to Narendra Nath.

When the monks removed to Baranagore from Cossipore they took with them, not only the Master's relics, but also his bedding, clothes, furniture and the utensils which had been used in serving him, as valuable treasures; in all their subsequent moves these have gone with them. To this day they are being preserved by the monks of the Order with a religious devotion. The monastery was located at Baranagore from the year 1886 to 1892. From 1892 to 1897 the monastery was at Alambazar in the neighbourhood of Dakshineswar. Thence it was removed to the garden-house of Nilâmbar Mukherjee on the bank of the Ganges, exactly across the river from the suburb, Baranagore. Now it is established permanently a short distance up the Ganges—which the Master loved so much—in Belur, the beautiful and spacious premises secured by Swami Vivekananda for his fellow-monks. And it was he who carried the urn containing the relics on his head from the garden-house of Nilambar Babu, and as he placed it in the Belur Math he said with tears in his eyes, "Now I have placed the Master here. He will remain here permanently." He wept as he remembered the memorable words of the Master uttered some years ago at the Cossipore garden during his last illness, "Wheresoever you choose to put me, there I shall gladly abide."

To return to the time when the Cossipore house had to be given up. Naturally the question arose,—what was to become of the young disciples who were planning to embrace the monastic life? A few of them, Tarak, Latu and Gopal Senior, had already given up their homes and relatives. Latu and Jogin had accompanied the Holy Mother to Vrindavan, whither Tarak soon followed. Naren was determined that the young boys should renounce the world at once. Some of the householders out of their love for the lads thought, "How will they get on? We cannot leave them to wander about like ordinary Sâdhus. They are still boys with bright prospects before them. Let them return to their homes. That is the wisest course; it will make them as well as their relatives happy." Others clearly saw that it was impossible for them to do so, imbued as they were with Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of stern renunciation.

In the days before the passing of the Master, several of the young men, even while serving him, were studying in the university, and their parents and guardians, naturally eager to get them back to the world, urged upon them the necessity of continuing their studies. The pressure was very strong and some of the boys returned to their homes to finish their courses and to please their families. But those who were determined not to go back, how and where were they to live? They had no means and no place to go to. At this time, Surendra Nath Mitra, the lay devotee who had borne the major part of the expenses of the Master's illness, had a strange vision. One evening, Sri Ramakrishna appeared to him and asked him to aid the boys in their sad plight. He went at once to them and said, "Brothers, where will you go? Let me rent a house where you may stay together, and where we householders may find a temporary refuge from the worries of the world. I used to give a little towards the expenses of the Cossipore garden-house. I will gladly continue that help, and you will thus be enabled to hire a house and live very simply." Naren was overcome with emotion.

Just at this time, Tarak returned from Vrindavan, and he and Narendra Nath went in search of quarters to house the monks. After a vigorous search a house was found at Baranagore, midway between Dakshineswar and Calcutta. It was a dreary, deserted place, sadly in need of repairs, very old, and with the reputation of being haunted. It was two stories in height; the lower story was the resort of lizards and snakes. The gateway had long since tumbled down. The verandah which flanked the front part of the upper story showed signs of decay; the main room where the monks lived was in a most dilapidated state. Indeed, nobody else would have lived there. To the east of the house was another one which had been used as a chapel; to the west was a jungle-like garden overgrown with weeds and undergrowth; at the back was a pond covered with green scum which was a breeding place for mosquitoes. The whole place was weird.

This dreary retreat was chosen because of its cheapness, and its nearness to the holy Ganges and the Baranagore burning-ghat where the body of the Master had been consigned to the flames. The monks were glad to escape from the turmoil of city life to the solitude where their meditations had few or no interruptions. The house was rented at Rs. 10/- a month.

Tarak and Gopal Senior occupied the new quarters alone at first. Some of the others had gone back for the moment to their respective homes. A few were on pilgrimage. Rakhal was in Monghyr. Kali, Jogin and Latu were in Vrindavan with the Holy Mother. Naren was compelled to go home at times, for he felt that he must arrange his family affairs before finally setting out on the high road of monasticism, never to return. A case was pending in the court involving the family home, and Naren as the eldest of the family had to be present at the hearings. But in common with all the young men he visited Baranagore frequently, spending most of the nights and a large part of the days there.

That all these boys eventually formed themselves into the Ramakrishna Brotherhood was largely the work of Naren. When his family matters were settled and he saw his way clear to follow the monastic life, he went to the homes of those boys who had resumed their studies and in a very whirlwind of enthusiasm tried to induce them to return to Baranagore. He would argue with them for hours, in his efforts to persuade them to come with him to the monastery, never stopping until he had gained his point. Once at the monastery they could not resist the spiritual impetus of Naren's songs and thrilling conversations. He would talk of the departed Master and his life of renunciation with such vividness of language and such intensity of spirit that none could withstand him.

Narendra Nath was like a spiritual lion, and his brother disciples looked upon him as their leader, not only because the Master had taught them to do so and his personality unconsciously dominated their every inmost thought and desire, but because he seemed to be the mouthpiece of the Master; and yet Naren was their brother and comrade. Their love for him almost amounted to reverence. The Master's words concerning him were constantly in their minds. Did they in their zeal for realisation disobey him and run to excess in the practice of austerities, all that he would say was, "Did not the Master himself give all of you into my charge?" They could not escape the magnetism of his personality. His face, his speech, his eyes, the manner in which he walked, the way in which he showed his confidence in them, and cheered and spurred them on, even his methods of admonishing them, made him seem the spirit of the Master incarnate as it were.

About this time an incident occurred which clinched the resolve of the boys in their resolution to renounce the world. A few days after coming to the Baranagore Math, they received an invitation, which was readily accepted, from Baburam's mother to make a short visit to Antpur, his native village. They were most cordially received. Here the light of their combined spiritual fire blazed up into a tremendous conflagration. Narendra's religious enthusiasm added fuel to the flame; it seemed as if the spirit of the Master was speaking and working through him. He was intensely possessed by the living vision of the Sannyâsin's life and would cry out, "Let man-making be the goal of our lives! Let us make this our only Sâdhanâ! Away with vain learning! Let not the glamour of the world captivate our minds even for a moment! Realisation of God is the one and the sole thing in life! That is what Sri Ramakrishna's life represented! We must realise God!" The boys inspired by these thoughts and fired by a oneness of purpose became aware of a sense of unity—a feeling that they were all inseparably connected by some wonderful spiritual power, making them brothers; and during their stay at Antpur they seemed to grow into one body, one mind and one soul. The days passed in meditation, song and prayer. The Master was the sole topic of conversation. His name was always on their lips and in their thought. Upon all alike there seemed to descend a great spirit of renunciation, a desire to take the Sannyâsin's vow, each in the presence of the others. The monastic spirit seemed to be intensified in their hearts, both for their own liberation as well as for the good of the world. And every disciple saw in his brother disciples a world of spiritual force; and that vision intensified the love amongst them. This was bound to be, for the spirit which was the Master's was destined to be perpetuated, not singly or isolatedly as in the ordinary case of Guru and disciple, but organised in a definite form.

Thus at Antpur, in the still hours, great things were happening in subtle ways, knitting the brothers together in indissoluble close bonds. All this found expression one night before a huge Dhuni in the compound of the house made holy with their prayers. It was late in the evening when the monks gathered together before the fire of huge logs. Overhead was the canopy of the Indian sky, and all around ineffable peace. The meditation lasted a long time. When a break was made Naren began to tell the story of the Lord Jesus, beginning with the wondrous mystery of his birth through his death on to the resurrection. Through the eloquence of Narendra, the boys were admitted into that apostolic world wherein Paul had preached the gospel of the Arisen Christ and spread Christianity far and wide. Naren made his plea to them to become Christs themselves, to aid in the redemption of the world; to realise God and to deny themselves as the Lord Jesus had done. Standing there before the Dhuni, with the flames lighting up their countenances and with the crackling of the wood the sole disturbance of their thought, they took the vows of Sannyâsa before God and one another. The very air seemed to vibrate with their ecstatic fervour. Strangely, the monks discovered afterwards that it was Christmas Eve! Before returning to Baranagore they all went on pilgrimage to the famous temple of Târakeswar Siva to worship the Lord of Monks.

After returning Sarat and Sasi immediately renounced, and joined the Baranagore monastery. Then Rakhal, Niranjan, Baburam and Kali came, followed by Subodh and Sarada Prasanna, the latter having passed his First Arts Examination that very year. Gangadhar who could never bear any separation from his beloved Naren was a frequent visitor to the monastery. After his return from a pilgrimage to Tibet he joined the Order. Hari as also Tulasi, frequent visitors to the monastery, ultimately became members. With the exception of short trips here and there, for three years, until he became the itinerant monk, Narendra was always with them, guiding and inspiring them. Jogin and Latu who had been staying at Vrindavan with the Holy Mother, returned to Calcutta after about a year and joined the little group at Baranagore. Thus in the course of one year, the Baranagore monastery was filled with the young men who had caught their inspiration from the Master.

And what a life they led! Unwilling to beg, they lived on what chance would bring. They vied with one another in doing the household tasks, even the most menial ones. Many were the days when there was nothing to eat, but the spiritual discourses, meditation and singing went on as though their bodies did not exist. Their only clothes were the Kaupin (loin cloth) and a few Geruâ pieces; a mat on the floor sufficed for their bed; a few pictures of saints and gods and goddesses, the Japamâlâ or beads and a Tânpurâ (musical instrument) hung from the walls. Their whole library consisted of about a hundred books in all. There was only one piece of cloth and a Chaddar to be worn about the shoulders, which were common property and were hung upon a line so that whosoever had to leave the premises might have wherewith to be clothed respectably. Surendra Nath Mitra, or Suresh Babu as he was called by the community, was the ministering angel of the monastery and looked after the bodily needs of the monks. The small sum which he at first gave being insufficient for their needs he increased. Not satisfied with this, he kept himself secretly informed as to the conditions in the Math, and often sent extra money or provisions to alleviate their extreme poverty.

Sometimes, however, there were visitors of quite a different nature. These were the guardians and relatives of the young monks, who came hoping to induce them to return to the worldly life. They would implore, weep, threaten, but to no avail; the monks were inexorable. Their renunciation was complete and final. Not even the thought of their mothers was allowed to stand in the way of their realisation of God. They flatly refused to recognise the authority of the guardians and took refuge in silence when they would say, "Naren is the root of all this evil. The boys had returned home and had renewed their studies when he came and upset all our plans."

That was life indeed at Baranagore, ecstasy surpassing ecstasy. Oftentimes Sankirtana (religious songs of praise sung in chorus) would begin in the morning and continue till evening with no thought of food or rest. In their burning desire for God-vision Prâyopaveshana, that is, meditation without interruption with such entire disregard of the body that death ensues, did not seem extreme.

The best description of the days at Baranagore comes from the lips of Naren himself. Many years after the greatest triumph of his career, a disciple asked him, "Mahârâj, how did you maintain yourselves at that time?" The Swami's mind travelled back across the years, his whole face took on an expression, half-sad, half-glorious, as old memories flitted across his mind. Of a sudden he turned upon the disciple with, "What a silly question! We were Sannyâsins, don't you see? We never thought of the morrow. We used to live on what chance brought. Suresh Babu and Balaram Babu have passed away. Were they alive they would dance with joy at the sight of this Math!" Continuing, he remarked, "You have heard of Suresh Babu's name, I dare say! Know him to be the source of this Math. It was he who helped to found the Baranagore Math. It was Suresh Mitra who supplied our needs! Who can equal him in piety and faith, my boys?" Musingly, he went on, "There were days at the Baranagore Math when we had nothing to eat. If there was rice, salt was lacking. Some days, that was all we had, but nobody cared. Leaves of the Bimba creeper boiled, salt and rice—this was our diet for months! Come what would, we were indifferent. We were being carried on in a strong tide of religious practices and meditation. Oh, what days! Demons would have run away at the sight of such austerities, to say nothing of men! Ask Rakhal, Sasi and others; they will tell you. The more circumstances are against you, the more manifest becomes your inner power. Do you understand?" It was only to his disciples in whom he desired to kindle the same fire of devotion and renunciation that he was so frank; with others he was intensely reticent about those days.

Swami Sadânanda, an early disciple of the Leader, speaking in later times of these days as they were lived by his Guru, said, "During these years Swamiji would work twenty-four hours at a time. He was like a lunatic, in his activity. Early in the morning, whilst it was still dark he would rise and call the others, singing, "Awake! Arise, all ye who would drink of the divine nectar!" And long after midnight he and the other monks would still be sitting on the roof of the monastery building, singing canticles of praise. The neighbours expostulated, but to no avail. And the musical voice of Swamiji would lead the chanting of the names of 'Sita-Rama' or of 'Radha-Krishna.' Those were strenuous days. There was no time for rest. Outsiders came and went. Pandits argued and discussed. But he, the Swami, was never for one moment idle, never dull."

In the Baranagore monastery, hours would be consumed in the study of philosophy. The theories of Kant, Hegel, Mill and Spencer were discussed by the devotees; even the atheists and materialists received their share of attention. Besides philosophy, religion, theology, history, sociology, literature, art and science were touched upon. If the talk was whether God existed or not, Naren would prove with the backing of logic and reason that God was a myth. Again he would be equally convincing in his argument that God was the only reality in the Universe. The Sânkhya, Yoga, Nyâya, Vaiseshika, Mimâmsa and Vedânta—every one in its turn was matched against the others, and their points of agreement and difference were brought out with rigorous analytical acumen. The Vedânta was compared with the Buddhistic philosophy and *vice versa*. Occasionally Christian missionaries would come to the Math to argue with the monks. After defeating them at every point Narendra would expound to them the greatness of Christ.

Often he would develop most original lines of thought, illustrative of the historical import of Sri

Ramakrishna's life and teachings and their influence upon the present generations of Hindus. He would show how that life was destined to alter their theological outlook by giving them a true understanding of the Hindu ideals of worship. Narendra's voice was the delight of the monks. It made them recall Sri Ramakrishna's words spoken several years before, "As the snake remains spell-bound with its hood up on hearing the sweet music of the flute, so does He who is in the heart, the Antaryâmi, when Naren sings!"

Together with meditation, song and study, the young monks observed all the religious festivals, and it is interesting to see how they celebrated the first Sivarâtri, the Night of Siva, at the Baranagore Math. They began the day by singing a song of the glories of Siva which had just been composed by Naren. The twenty-four hours of the day were spent in fasting, praying and worshipping. During the night, at stated intervals,—their bodies covered with ashes,—they danced clapping their hands, and lifted their voices in song, calling on, "Hara! Hara! Mahâdeva!" Or "Siva Guru! Siva Guru!" in a classic and continuous chant. At the close of the night, during the early hours of the morning the Homa fire was lighted and oblations made in the names of all gods and goddesses and Incarnations of all nations.

The spiritual atmosphere at Baranagore was wonderful in these days. Everyone marvelled at the austerities of Naren and his brother monks. Even yet, one can hear it said, "It is impossible for ordinary men to bear such rigorous hardships and practise such Tapasyâ as they did." And yet they themselves were never quite satisfied with their spiritual progress and in their sorrow in not realising God would sigh, "Oh, wonderful were Sri Ramakrishna's renunciation, and intense longing for God: We are not able to attain even one-sixteenth part of what he taught!"

Though covered with the outward veneer of Jnâna, Naren was all Bhakti within. One day, he said to a young brother disciple who was mentally disturbed because of the futility of his attempts to realise God, "Have you not read the Gitâ? God is residing in the hearts of all creatures. He is, as it were, revolving the wheel of life to which we are tied. You are more insignificant than even the crawling worm. Can you really know God? Try to think for a minute of the real nature of man. Of these innumerable stars, every one is a solar system. We see only one solar system and know only an infinitesimal fraction of that. The earth compared with the sun is like a small ball and man is but an insect moving on its surface." Then he burst into a song in which he resigned himself to God and besought His aid to steer clear of the pitfalls and temptations of the world. Again he said to his brother disciple, "Take refuge in God. Resign yourself completely at His feet. Don't you remember the words of Sri Ramakrishna? God is like a hill of sugar. You are an ant. One grain of sugar is sufficient for you. Yet you want to carry home the entire hill. Sukadeva was at the most a bigger ant. Therefore I would say to Kali, 'Do you want to measure God by your foot-rule?' God is the infinite ocean of mercy! He will shower His grace on you. Pray to Him, 'Protect us always, O Lord, by Thy benign mercy. From the unreal lead us to the Real, from darkness lead us unto Light; from death lead us to Immortality!'" "How should one pray to God?" the brother disciple asked. "Why," Naren replied, "only you need to repeat His Name. That is what Sri Ramakrishna told us." Then the boy said, "Now you say that God exists, and in another mood you tell us that according to Chârvâka and other philosophers the world was not created by any extraneous agency, that it has evolved of itself." Naren said, "But have you not read chemistry? Hydrogen and oxygen do unite to form water, etc., but not without the intervention of the human hand or some intelligence. Everybody admits that there must be an Intelligent Force guiding all these combinations, an Omniscient Being directing this phenomenal universe." "But how can we know that He is merciful?" Narendra said, "'Your benign face,' the Vedas say. John Stuart Mill echoes this. He must be an ocean of mercy who has infused one little spark of mercy into the human heart. The Master used to say, 'Faith is the one essential thing.' God is very near us. You only require faith to realise this." Then the young disciple said good-humouredly, "Sometimes you say that God does not exist. Now you are telling us that He does. You cannot be veracious in your statement, when you change your opinions so often." Naren replied, "I shall never change *these* words: *We do not have faith in God so long as we are assailed by egotism and desire.* Some sort of desire always persists." Then overwhelmed with emotion, he began to sing, "He is the merciful parent always giving shelter to those who take refuge in Him." All the songs that followed spoke of devotion and divine fervour.

And in those days everyone was filled with the spirit of the Master. There was not a day in which his personality was not most realistically felt. And for these disciples there was neither day nor night, neither hours nor moments,—for they dwelt in a state of ecstasy. Indeed they were mad, mad for God-vision. And all sorts of spiritual experiences were theirs. Some would sit motionless for hours plunged in meditation, whilst others sang themselves into devotional rapture. The nights of some were spent at the burning Ghat deeply absorbed in Japa and meditation. There were still others who would tell their beads all day and all night or sit night after night before a Dhuni in their determination to realise God.

Naren was as intense as the rest, but his sense of responsibility for them caused him to watch them with a vigilant eye and when he found any of them practising austerities that were too severe, he would say, "Do you think you are all going to be Ramakrishna Paramahamsas? That will never be. A Ramakrishna Paramahamsa is born only once in an age!"

The Master seemed to be alive and enthroned in the tabernacle of the Math to those devotees. Besides the daily worship before his image in which Mantras were recited, lights waved, incense burned and gongs beaten in joyous adoration, offerings of the purest food obtainable were made. Particularly impressive were the twilight hours, the time of Aratrika or the evening service, when the monks lifted their voices in unison in the soul-inspiring verse which was adapted from the hymn chanted at that hour in the city of Benares at the temple of Viswanâth.

> Jaya Siva Omkâra! Bhaja Siva Omkâra!
> Brahmâ, Vishnu, Sadâsiva! Hara, Hara,
> Hara, Mahâdeva!

It was Sasi, who became known afterwards as Swami Râmakrishnânanda, who spent himself in constant spiritual service of the Master. He was the 'mother' of the Math, the self-constituted guardian of the rest in practical matters, literally routing them out of their meditations to attend to their ordinary duties. Though he was himself inclined to deep meditation and fervent prayer, he compelled himself to remember their wants, to force them to bathe or to take their scanty meals. Narendra Nath recalling these blessed days to a disciple, many years later, said, "O, what a steadfastness to the ideal did we ever find in Sasi! He was a mother to us. It was he who managed about our food. We used to get up at three o'clock in the morning. Then all of us, some after bathing, would go to the worship-room and be lost in Japa and meditation! There were times when the meditation lasted to four or five o'clock in the afternoon. Sasi would be waiting with our dinner; if necessary, he would, by sheer force, drag us out of our meditation. Who cared then if the world existed or not!"

The spirit of true Sannyâsa was upon all. And Naren would say in protest to a householder's argument, "What! Even if we do not see God, shall we return to the life of the senses? Shall we degrade our higher natures?" There were times when Naren would cry out, "Of what value are my realisations! I have seen the Mantra in letters of gold and shining with effulgence! Many times have I seen the Form of Kâli and of other aspects of the Personal God! But, where, oh, where is Peace! I am dissatisfied with everything. Everything, even talking to devotees has become distasteful to me. It seems that there is no such thing as God. Let me starve to death if I cannot realise the Truth." Was this discontent caused by the memory of his Nirvikalpa Samâdhi in Cossipore? No wonder he was dissatisfied with Forms. Had he not experienced the Formless! One of the householder devotees wrote of him at this time in his diary, "To-day Narendra has put on a new Geruâ cloth. How fascinating he appears! His face is full of the fire of wisdom, and yet how it is mellowed with divine love!

Blessed are those monks who think day and night of nothing but God!"

And the Baranagore monastery,—what worlds of spirituality and insight does it call to mind! To the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda the word "Baranagore" is synonymous with "Spiritual Sâdhanâ." If the garden of Dakshineswar was literally saturated with the divine presence and blessedness thereof, the monastery of Baranagore was none the less so, for there these young men who had sat at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna developed, in a great measure, their strength and holiness. All who came within the sphere of their influence were caught up in their spirit of God-intoxication. Every one of these young men whom Sri Ramakrishna had made his very own, represented a phase of manifestation of the Master himself. With the delight of the martyr they practised the severest of spiritual austerities, calling his name until their voices gave way and they sank deep into meditation. The world had no meaning for them. They were aware only of God, and in those days there was lighted a fire of the spirit which nothing can extinguish. Already has it swept across even to foreign lands, spreading as it goes, the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

XIII

THE ITINERANT DAYS: THE NORTHERN TIRTHAS

Thus was consolidated the monastic Order of Ramakrishna at Baranagore. Some time at this period they performed the sacred Virajâ ceremony and took the vows of lifelong celibacy and poverty, dedicating their lives to the realisation of God. The old names were changed for new ones to complete their severance from the old world and its associations. Rakhal and Yogin became respectively, Swâmis Brahmânanda and Yogânanda; Baburam and Niranjan, Swamis Premânanda and Niranjanânanda; Sasi and Hari, Swamis Râmakrishnânanda and Turiyânanda; Latu and Sarada, Swamis Adbhutânanda and Trigunâtitânanda; Tarak and Kali Swamis Sivânanda and Abhedânanda; Sarat and Gangadhar, Swamis Sâradânanda and Akhandânanda; Gopal Senior and Subodh became Swamis Advaitânanda and Subodhânanda and Tulasi became Swami Nirmalânanda. Some years later the list was completed by Hari Prasanna under the name of Swami Vijnânânanda. Naren did not assume any permanent name. During his itinerant days he changed his name several times in order to avoid recognition. On the eve of his sailing for America he took the name of Swami Vivekânanda at the request of the Mahârâjâ of Khetri.[1]

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[1] Hereafter we shall refer to these monks by their Sannyâsa names except in the case of Naren whom we shall continue to refer as Naren or simply as the Swami till his starting for the West when he actually took the name of Swami Vivekananda.

Even as the feature of the Order was twofold, that of itinerant monkhood with personal freedom and yet bound by the love of the Master and the inspiration of his divine life to an organisation with a definite mission to fulfil,—so in the personality of every member, especially Naren, were seen the two tendencies at war with each other at times. Loyalty to the Math and its mission was at variance very often with the traditional ideal of monasticism and there were times when it seemed the Sâdhu tendency would force them to the isolated Sannyâsin's life in spite of themselves.

The tendency to pilgrimage was manifest even from the beginning; for several of the monks, as soon as the Master had departed, accompanied the Holy Mother to Vrindâvan. Trigunatita one day abruptly left Baranagore without confiding his plans to any one. He left a note behind which read, "I am going to Vrindavan on foot. It is dangerous for me to stay here. Ideas may change. Formerly I used to dream of home and parents. Then I saw the form of Mâyâ. Twice have I suffered much. Indeed, twice I had to return home. Therefore I am going on a long journey. The Master once said to me, 'Never trust your relatives. They can do anything.'" He however returned very soon to the Math. Akhandananda started on a pilgrimage over the Himâlayas to Tibet. Abhedananda, after his return from Vrindavan, again set out, in the company of Saradananda and Premananda, for Puri. Brahmananda often spoke of going to some distant solitary place, such as the bank of the sacred Narmadâ, to meditate. Even the holy atmosphere of Baranagore seemed to them not free enough; they

Where the former names of the monks are used in quotations or extracts we request the reader to refer to this page for identity, if necessary.

desired to live as wandering monks, depending solely on God. But Ramakrishnananda chose to stay by the sacred relics of the Master.

Naren, too, was becoming restless. He felt his attachment to the brother disciples as a sort of golden chain impeding his progress towards the realisation of God. Therefore he resolved to strike out into the unknown paths of the monk's life. One by one, all his Gurubhais, excepting Ramakrishnananda, had gone. The first wanderings of Naren were, one might say, but temporary absences. He would sally forth on one journey or pilgrimage after another, but would return against his will very soon. Although every time he left he would say, "It will be for good and all this time," something inevitably forced him back.

Thus with the exception of several flying visits to Vaidyanâth and Simultalâ, and a visit to Antpur, whither he had gone at the earnest solicitations of his friends who felt that he needed a rest from the strenuous life of the monastery, Naren did not leave Baranagore until the year 1888 was well on its way.

He had made up his mind to break from the monastery to test his own strength, to gather experiences of a new life, to make himself absolutely fearless, and at the same time to force his brother disciples to learn self-reliance and to stand alone. He struggled hard to free himself; his mind wavered between the desire for the life of the Sâdhu and his sense of responsibility for the Brotherhood.

There are necessarily some blanks in this part of Naren's life-history, for he himself was indifferent as to the recording of his plans and journeys and spoke of them afterwards vaguely, casually. Then, too, he held his spiritual experience during this time too sacred to be discussed, even with his brothers. And yet something is known of him as the wandering monk.

Sometimes one or other of the monks accompanied him; and those householders whom he met and initiated as lay disciples on his long tours throughout the land, have faithfully recorded the events during the time he lived with them, including even conversations. Then there are his letters written occasionally to his Gurubhais and his own disciples. Thus one is able to construct his life from 1887 to 1893 fairly accurately. All his brother monks excepting Ramakrishnananda, and Adbhutananda were with him in some one or other of his travels up to the time when he broke off all communication with the Baranagore Math, and these have become, as it were, his verbal historians. But more particularly Akhandananda, who was with him longer than any of the others, from the end of July, 1890, till the latter part of the autumn of the same year.

The first definite journey on which Naren set out, accompanied by Premananda and Fakir Babu, a lay devotee of the Master, was to Benares. He stayed there for about a week. The sacred Ganges, the scores of praying votaries, the numerous temples, the atmosphere of holiness, the thought that it was here that the Lord Buddha and Sankara had preached,—all these made a vivid appeal to his imagination.

One day, as he was returning from the temple of Mother Durgâ, he was pursued by a troop of monkeys and fled, fearing that they might harm him; suddenly he heard the voice of an old Sannyâsin calling out to him, "Stop, always face the brutes!" Naren turned, his fear gone; seeing him defiant the monkeys fled. In a lecture given in New York, years later, he referred to this incident and pointed out the moral of the story in this wise, "So face nature! Face ignorance! Face illusion! Never fly!"

At Benares he stayed at the Ashrama of

Dwârakâdâs. This gentleman introduced him to the celebrated Pandit and Bengali writer, Bhudev Chandra Mukhopâdhyâya. Naren held long conversations with him. When they parted, the Pandit said, "Wonderful! Such vast experience and insight at such an early age! I am sure he will be a great man!" He also visited the great saint, Trailanga Swami, who lived, lost to all outward activity, absorbed in the deepest meditation. To him, Sri Ramakrishna also had gone many years before. Naren next went to Swami Bhâskarânanda, a celebrated ascetic of great learning. The conversation drifted gradually to the subject of the conquest of lust and gold. This was the one great condition laid down by Sri Ramakrishna for the realisation of God,—one which he impressed with great emphasis on his monastic disciple. Bhaskarananda speaking *ex cathedra,* as it were, said, "No one can completely renounce lust and gold." Naren replied boldly, "There have been many saints who have done so. And I myself have seen at least one who had completely overcome lust and gold." The Swami smiled but did not believe him, and Naren left the place in righteous indignation.

From Benares Naren returned to Baranagore. As in the past, he spent his days with his brother disciples in meditation, study and discussion. He had seen by this time a bit of India and during his travels had come across various people and many shades of opinion. His outlook was considerably widened, and he desired that his brother disciples also enlarged their mental horizon. Sometimes a dim vision of the missionary life, the urge of the inner self, to go about ministering to the oppressed and down-trodden would present itself before Naren's mind. This idea of service to man as the manifestation of God obsessed him at times. What better way could be found of applying the ideas of Vedânta to practical life? And he strove to inspire his brother disciples with this new idea of religion. Even in those early days Naren would urge them to go to the village of the outcasts to preach; but the monks were quite averse from preaching. Their ideal was the realisation of God, first and foremost; after that, let their example be the teacher even as it had been with the Master. And the injunctions of Naren had confirmed them in this. Though he constantly insisted upon the necessity of making oneself fit by realisation before one preached, yet sometimes the spirit of the preacher would take hold of him, and once he said to a brother monk who was inveighing against lectures and sermons, "Everyone is preaching; what they do unconsciously I will do consciously. Aye, even if you, my brother monks, stand in my way, I will go and preach among the Pariahs in the lowest slums. Preaching means expression. Because Trailanga Swami remains silent and never talks do you think he does not preach? His very silence is a sermon! Even trees and plants are preaching!" Yes, Naren as Swami Vivekananda was to preach consciously and with soul-stirring eloquence that which hitherto the saints had done in silence. In Baranagore this great task commenced and his first audience was this little group of monks and devotees.

Naren's stay this time at Baranagore was a short one, for he was eager to take up again the solitary meditative life of the Sannyâsin. He soon set out for the northern Tirthas. His first halt was at Benares, where he met Babu Pramadâdâs Mitra, the great Sanskrit scholar, who was acquainted with Akhandananda and through him had learned of Narendra Nath. Naren and Pramadadas soon became close friends, and Naren wrote many letters from the various places of pilgrimage asking the advice of Pramadadas in interpreting the Hindu scriptures.

Next he visited Ayodhyâ where he pondered long upon the Ramayana, building the great empire of the King-God Rama out of the materials of his learning and imagination, and listened with rapture to the singing of the Sâdhus in his praise. From Ayodhya he went on to Lucknow where he was lost in admiration of the splendour of the palaces of the late Nawabs of Oudh, and of the city's gardens and mosques. From Lucknow on to the beautiful city of Agra of Mogul memories and greatness. The handicraft and workmanship of Indian artisans astounded him; the beauty of the Tâj Mahal overpowered him. He visited it many times, seeing it from many angles, in every perspective and light and, above all, through his love for India. He used to say, "Every square inch of this wondrous edifice is worth a whole day's patient observation, and it requires at least six months to make a real study of it!" The great fort at Agra stimulated his historic imagination; walking about the streets of Agra amidst its palaces and tombs, he saw the whole Mohammedan era unfold before him.

From Agra he went on to Vrindavan, reaching it during the early part of August, 1888. The last thirty miles he went on foot, travelling as an itinerant monk with no possessions save a staff, a Kamandalu (water pot) and one or two books. About two miles from Vrindavan, he saw a man comfortably smoking a Chillum (pipe) of tobacco by the wayside. Naren was weary and worn and felt that a smoke would do him good; so he asked the man to allow him to have a pull or two at the Chillum. The smoker shrank back and said hesitatingly, "Sir, I am a Bhangi, a sweeper!" Naren, gripped by traditional ideas of caste and social position, shrank back too and went on his way without a smoke. After going a short distance, the thought struck him, "What, I have taken the Sannyâsin's vow and have given up all ideas of caste, family prestige and all, and yet I fell back into caste ideas when the man told me that he was a sweeper! And I could not smoke the Chillum which he had touched! That was due to ages of habit!" Nothing would do but he must turn back in search of the man. He found him where he had left him, still smoking. Naren said to him, "My son, please prepare me a Chillum of tobacco." He did not listen to the man's objections this time but insisted on taking the tobacco from that very Chillum. After smoking it Naren continued on his way to Vrindavan. In speaking of Sannyâsa once to a disciple, later on he cited this incident and said, "Do you think the ideals of Sannyâsa are easy to practise in life, my boy? There is no other path of life so arduous and difficult. Let your foot slip ever so little on the edge of a precipice, and you fall to the valley below. If one has taken the Sannyâsin's vow, one has to examine oneself every moment to see if one is free of the ideas of caste, colour, etc. That incident taught me the great lesson that I should not despise anyone, but must think of all as children of the Lord."

Arriving at Vrindavan, Naren rested at Kâlâ Babu's Kunja, a temple erected by the ancestors of Balaram Bose, one of the lay disciples of the Master. Here Naren felt as if the flood-gates of his heart were suddenly opened; the associations of the place with the life of Sri Krishna and his divine consort Radha evoked in him the highest devotional feeling. The life of Sri Krishna became vividly real to him and he made up his mind to visit the suburbs of Vrindavan, where so many of the incidents that are told of Sri Krishna took place. So we find him wending his way towards Govardhan Hill. Once, in making a circuit of it, he made the vow that he would eat only what food was offered to him without the asking. By noon-time of the first day he was exceedingly hungry. To add to his discomfort, it rained heavily. Faint with hunger and much walking, he went on and on; suddenly he heard someone calling to him from the rear, but he paid no attention. Nearer and nearer came the man calling out that he had brought food for him. Naren began to run as fast as he could to test this apparent act of Providence. The man ran also and about a mile farther on overtook him at last and insisted on his accepting the food. That done, the man went away without a word. Naren burst into tears at this proof of the Lord's care of His devotee in the wilderness.

From Govardhan, Naren came to Râdhâkunda, a place held sacred by the Vaishnavas because of its association with Radha. At this time he had only the Kaupin, or a narrow strip of cloth about his loins; having no other to wear after his bath he took this off, washed it and left it on the side of the tank to dry, whilst he was bathing. When he had bathed, to his surprise the Kaupin was gone! In his search hither and thither, he chanced to look up in a tree and he saw a monkey sitting there with the cloth in its hands. When the monkey refused to surrender it, Naren was filled with anger against Radha, the presiding deity of the place, and vowed that he would go into the innermost recesses of the forest and starve himself to death. As he advanced into the jungle in pursuance of his plan, a man (who probably had seen the whole incident) came up with a new Geruâ cloth and some food which Naren accepted. Naren retraced his steps and found, to his surprise, his Kaupin lying on the very spot where he himself had put it to dry before entering the water.

Next, we see Naren at the Hathras railway station on his way to Hardwâr. The station-master, Sarat Chandra Gupta, was a remarkable character, a Bengali who had been reared amongst the Mohammedans of Jaunpur and who spoke Hindi and Urdu with more fluency than his mother tongue. His whole character might be summed up in three words,—sweetness, sincerity and manliness. As he was going about in the performance of his duty, the figure of a monk, seated on the ground in the station compound, caught his eye. At the very first sight he was attracted by the aura of spirituality about the young monk and went up to him to find if he might be of some service. After an exchange of greetings, Sarat asked, "Swamiji, are you hungry?" The monk replied, "Yes, I am." "Then please come to my quarters," said Sarat. Naren asked with the simplicity of a boy, "But what will you give me to eat?" Quoting from a Persian poem, Sarat said, "Oh beloved, you have come to my house. I shall prepare the most delicious dish for you with the flesh of my heart." Naren accepted the invitation. Later Sarat found the Swami singing a Bengali song signifying: "My beloved must come to me with ashes on his moon face." The young devotee disappeared, to return divested of his official clothes, with ashes on his face.

In the course of his conversation with the station-master Naren learned that Brojen Babu, an old acquaintance, lived close by, and after the meal was over he went to call on him. Brojen Babu welcomed him cordially and insisted that he should stay with him. All the time Naren was with him the whole Bengali population of the town poured in upon him. Sarat and his friend, Nata Krishna, were constant visitors and became attached to him. In a letter reminiscent of those days Nata Krishna writes: "Thus we with others spent the most blessed days of our life in constant spiritual conversations with him. By the power of his holy company, the sectarian quarrels and ill-feeling amongst the different factions of the Bengalees vanished. Those who entertained the pride of age or high position in society, used to come and sit like children before the young monk, forsaking their conceit of knowledge and position, and ask him questions on religious matters. The evening was generally spent in music, and all the gentlemen who assembled there were simply charmed with his sweet voice and sat for hours as if spell-bound. The more they heard him, the more they thirsted in their souls to hear him."

One day Sarat said to Naren, "Why do you look so sad?" Pausing for a while, Naren replied, "My son, I have a great mission to fulfil and I am in despair at the smallness of my capacity. I have an injunction from my Guru to carry out this mission. This is nothing less than the regeneration of my motherland. Spirituality has fallen to a low ebb and starvation stalks the land. India must become dynamic and effect the conquest of the world through her spirituality." Sarat, spell-bound at these words, said with all the ardour of his soul, "Here I am, Swamiji; what do you want me to do?" The monk demanded, "Are you prepared to take up the begging bowl and the Kamandalu and work for the great cause? Can you beg from door to door?" "Yes," was the bold reply; and with a begging bowl in hand he went round to beg from the porters of the station.

One morning Naren decided to leave Hathras.

He said to Sarat and Nata Krishna, "I cannot stay here any longer. We who are Sannyâsins should not remain long in any place. Besides, I am becoming attached to all of you. This is also a bondage in spiritual life. Do not press me!" Finding the Swami immovable in his resolve to go, Sarat and his friend were grief-stricken. They requested him to make them his disciples. Naren replied, "Why! Do not think that everything in the life of spirituality will be gained by merely becoming my disciples. Remember that God is in everything, and then whatever you do will make for your progress. I shall come back now and then to be with you." But Sarat was not to be thus put off; the Swami was forced to initiate him.

Sarat found a substitute to take on his duties, and accompanied the Swami to Hrishikesh. But the journey proved too strenuous for the disciple. Accustomed to much comfort he found that the Sannyâsin's life was one of constant and terrible Sâdhanâ, filled with uncertainties and hardships. "Once in our wanderings in the outlying districts of the Himalayas," said Sarat much later, "I fainted with hunger and thirst. The Swami cared for me and thus undoubtedly saved me from certain death. On another occasion, like a syce he led the horse, across a ford in a mountain river which was very dangerous because of its swiftness and slippery bottom. He risked his life several times for my sake. How can I describe him, friends, except by the word love, Love, LOVE! When I was too ill to do anything but stagger along, he carried my personal belongings, including my shoes." Therefore, it is not strange that in later life when he once, feeling forlorn, asked the Swami if he was going to give him up, the Swami should answer with a sweet severity, "Fool, do you not remember that I have carried even your shoes!" Still another time, as the Swami and his disciple were wandering through the jungle, they came across some bleached human bones, with bits of rotten Geruâ lying here and there. "See," said the Swami, "here a tiger has devoured a Sannyâsin! Are you afraid?" The disciple promptly replied, "Not with you, Swamiji!" Even in these early days, when he was an unknown Sâdhu, the force of his character and his power to inspire others, which were the Swami's main qualities, were to be plainly seen.

At Hrishikesh the Swami and the disciple lived like other monks. The Swami was in his element here, where the very atmosphere breathed monasticism. He was glad beyond measure to hear the murmurings of the sacred Ganges and see the distant snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas. They dwelt there in an atmosphere of intense prayer and meditation. But at this juncture the disciple fell seriously ill and there was no other course but to take him back to Hathras. The Swami who was desirous of staying at Hrishikesh for a time and then going on to the sacred Kedârnath and Badrinârâyan in the interior of the Himalayas, was forced to give up his plans.

So the Guru and the disciple journeyed back to Hathras where they were welcomed. But here Naren himself fell ill of malarial fever contracted at Hrishikesh. The brothers at the Baranagore Math heard of his illness and urged him to return as soon as possible. To ensure his return they reported that there were many pressing matters which made his presence in Calcutta necessary. Hearing this the Swami, in spite of his weakness, felt that he must go; and in taking leave of his disciple he urged him to come, as soon as he was well, to the Baranagore monastery. At the expiration of several months when he was sufficiently recovered, Sarat Gupta gave up his job and joined his master at the monastery. Here he was received with open arms by the monks and admitted into their hearts and into their life as one of them, and he became Swami Sadânanda.

The return of the Swami towards the end of 1888 was made the occasion for much jubilation at the Baranagore Math. Most of the monks were away on pilgrimage, but all of the householder disciples of the Master were present. With the exception of a short journey to Simultala where he went during the summer months of 1889 on account of his health and to see his relatives, this time the Swami stayed at the Baranagore Math for fully a year. Days passed in worship, prayer, meditation, study and song. Through loving discipline, Naren infused into his brother monks his own fire and wider knowledge of the mission that was before them, the mission which had been entrusted by the Master to his charge for fruition and dissemination. Most of the sublime ideas which he gave to the world in the time of his fame were not new, except in modes of expression, to his brother monks, for they had heard them in these Baranagore days. He broadened their perspective and made them think of India as an indivisible unit. Most of all, Naren initiated his fellow-monks into the living realities of Hinduism, making them conscious of the values of its thought and spirit. He made them capable of seeing Hinduism from the intellectual side and made them the defenders of the Faith against ruthless and ignorant criticism. He read and explained to them the sacred books of the Hindus.

The days at the Math were spent in strenuous study of the Hindu scriptures. Too poor to purchase books, the Swami borrowed some Vedânta literature from his friend Babu Pramadadas of Benares, together with a copy of Pânini's grammar for the Gurubhais so that they might study the Vedas. He writes thus to Babu Pramadadas: "The Vedas may well be said to have fallen quite out of vogue in Bengal. Many here in the Math are quite conversant with Sanskrit and are able to master the Samhitâ portion of the Vedas. They are of opinion that what has to be done must be done to a finish. So believing that a full measure of proficiency in the Vedic language is impossible without first mastering Panini's grammar, which is the best available for the purpose, a copy of the latter is felt to be a necessity. This Math is not wanting in men of perseverance, talent and penetrative intellect. I can hope that by the grace of our Master, they will acquire in a short time Panini's system and thus succeed in restoring the Vedas to Bengal."

The Swami at this time was passing through a phase of enquiry into social customs and the anomalies of many scriptural passages. In his wanderings he saw for himself what an incubus the social system was for the masses; even the scriptures forbade the study of the Vedas by Sudras. The caste system which had originally rested on individual merits and qualifications had now hopelessly degenerated into slavish insistence on birth and heredity. The Swami was convinced that the regeneration of India demanded the throwing open of the immortal truths of the Vedas and the Upanishads to the classes as well as the masses. He voiced all these doubts to Pramadadas Babu who was a great Sanskrit scholar and, at the same time, asked many searching questions regarding the nature of the highest realisation, the authority of the Vedas, the law of Karma, the apparent contradictions to be found in various schools of Indian philosophy, the real import of the apparently meaningless injunctions of the Smritis etc. These doubts and questions reflect only an intellectual stage of his reaching out towards the wisdom which was his in after years. His faith in the ideal of Truth and the realisations of the ancient seers as recorded in the scriptures was unshaken; he was striving to understand their real significance. He wanted to reach that standpoint from which he could reconcile all contradictions and differences. "I have not lost," he writes to Pramadadas Babu, "faith in a benign Providence—nor am I ever going to lose it,—my faith in the scriptures is unshaken. But by the will of God, the last six or seven years of my life have been full of constant struggles with hindrances and obstacles of all sorts. I have been vouchsafed the ideal Shâstra; I have seen the ideal man; and yet I fail myself to get on with anything to the end,—this is my profound misery."

But there were times when the Swami felt much "agitated and cramped" in mind. He was close to his mother and brothers who were living in abject poverty. The litigation over their ancestral properties left them almost destitute. This seemed, sometimes, too much for the Swami to bear. "Living near Calcutta," writes the Swami to his friend Pramadadas Babu, "I have to witness their adversity, and with the quality of Rajas prevailing, my egotism sometimes develops into a desire to plunge into action. In such moments, a fierce combat ensues in my mind, and so I wrote that my mind was terrible. Now the lawsuit is settled. So bless me that after a stay in Calcutta for a few days more to settle matters, I may bid adieu to this place for ever. Bless me that my heart may wax strong with supreme strength divine and that all forms of Mâyâ may drop off me for aye: 'We have taken up the Cross, Thou hast laid it upon us and grant us strength that we bear it unto death. Amen.'"

At such times the Swami would feel the strong desire to go again on pilgrimage, to pass his days in meditation and austerity. Often he would resolve to go to Benares and spend the time in the sacred city of Viswanâth. The presence of Pramadadas Babu there was an added temptation, for with him he might discuss many intricate problems of the scriptures. Life in Calcutta was becoming unbearable to him. Akhandananda was in the Himalayas. He wrote several times of crossing over to Tibet and gave many interesting descriptions of the Tibetan people and their customs. Four of the other disciples were in the Himalayas. The Swami's desire to go also became irresistible, and one day during the last part of December, 1889, he left the monastery for Vaidyanath on his way, to the sacred Tirthas of Northern India. His mind was longing for Benares. "My idea," writes the Swami from Vaidyanath, "is to remain there for some time and to watch how Viswanâth and Annapurnâ deal it out to my lot. And my resolve is something like 'either to lay down my life or realise my ideal'—so help me Lord of Kâshi."

But Providence decreed otherwise. At Vaidyanâth he learned that Yogananda, one of the brother disciples, was ill of small-pox at Allahabad. The Swami at once started for Allahabad. Through his nursing Yogananda recovered in a few days. Here the Swami received marked attention from the Bengalees of the town; they were astounded at his learning and wonderful character. The conversation centred chiefly around social and spiritual matters and the Swami criticised with great vehemence the social abuses and iniquities of the Hindus. Here he came across a Mussalman saint, "every line and curve of whose face showed that he was a Paramahamsa." Here too he heard of Pavhâri Bâbâ, the famous saint of Ghazipur. In order to meet him he went to Ghazipur during the third week of January, 1890.

The Swami stayed with Babu Satish Chandra Mukherjee and Rai Gagan Chandra Roy Bahadur. Satish Chandra was an old friend of the Swami's Calcutta days. At his house many persons came to hear and see the Swami. The Swami was pained to see his countrymen fallen from the ideal of the Hindu seers to the level of the materialistic Western life. "Everything here," writes the Swami to Pramadadas Babu at Benares, "appears good, the people are all gentlemen, but much westernised; it is a pity. I am thoroughly against the affectation of the West. Luckily my friend is not much inclined that way. What a frivolous civilisation is it indeed that foreigners have brought with them! What a materialistic illusion have they created! May Viswanâth save these weak-hearted!" In a postscript to the letter he adds, "Alas for the irony of fate, that in this land of Bhagavân Suka's birth, renunciation is looked down upon as a madness and sin!" He asked the social-reform champions of the place to refrain from violent denunciation and to carry on their work of mass education with infinite love and patience so that the growth might be natural, from within. He pitied those who had lost sight of the spiritual standards of the Hindu civilisation.

And who was Pavhari Baba? Born of Brâhmana parents in a village near Benares, he went in his boyhood to Ghazipur where, under the training of his uncle, a lifelong Brahmachârin, he became versed in Vyâkarana (grammar) and Nyâya (logic) and in the theology of the Râmânuja sect. On his uncle's death he resolved "to fill the gap with a vision that can never change." Possessed with the real determination to find Reality, he wandered throughout the land. At length he was initiated into the mysteries of Yoga on the top of Mount Girnâr in Kathiawar holy both to Hindu and Jain devotees. From Girnar he journeyed to Benares, where he met a great Sannyâsin, who lived in a cave in the high bank of the Ganges. Here he mastered the Advaita Vedânta system, after which he travelled for many years studying, living in great austerity. Finally he came to his old home, Ghazipur, where, emulating his teacher in Benares, he dug a hermitage in the ground, by the river's bank, staying there many hours a day in meditation, and spending the nights on the other side of the river in austere practices. His daily diet consisted of a handful of bitter Nimba leaves or a few pods of red pepper only. He held all work to be "worshipping the Lord," and he would often give the food he cooked, after offering it to his Ishtam, to the poor or to wandering monks, refusing himself to eat. So spare was his diet that he was called Pavhari Baba, "The Air-eating Father." As days went on, he spent more and more time in his cave, often months on end, until people wondered upon what he lived, and whether he was dead. After a time, however, the Baba emerged. When not absorbed in meditation he would receive visitors in a room above the entrance to his cave. Later he would see no one. Finally, one morning, smelling the odour of burning flesh and seeing volumes of smoke rising from his cell, people found that he had offered himself as a holocaust to the Lord, whilst his spirit soared into the blessedness of Samâdhi.

No wonder, then, that the Swami was anxious to meet him. Later he admitted that he owed a deep debt of gratitude to the saint, and spoke of him as one of the greatest masters he had ever loved and served.[1]

It was very difficult to get an interview with Pavhari Baba. He never left his room and when willing to speak at all he would come just to the door, speaking from the inside. When the Swami met the Babaji, he was greatly struck with his personality. "A great sage, indeed!" he writes. "It is all very wonderful, and in this atheistic age, a towering representation of marvellous power born of Bhakti and Yoga! I have sought refuge in his grace, and he has given me hope,—a thing very few are fortunate enough to get." The Babaji was also much pleased to meet the Swami and hoped that he might stay there for some time.

The Swami moved to the garden-house of Gagan Babu and began to practise severe asceticism. Though suffering from an attack of diarrhoea, he ate the coarse food obtained by begging. Almost every day he would go to the Babaji's cell and beg the grace of the saint. But Pavhari Baba was a wonderful man and full of humility. He never gave a direct reply to questions but would say, "What does this servant know?" But fire would flash as the talk went on. If the Swami were too pressing the Babaji would say, "Favour me highly by staying here for some days." When the Swami who was suffering from lumbago could not go to the Babaji, the Babaji would always send someone to inquire about the Swami's health.

It was at Ghazipur that the Swami met many European officials. Through Gagan Babu, he met Mr. Ross, a Government official in the opium department, who asked him many penetrating questions about the Hindu festivals. He also asked the Swami to write a paper on the Hindu festival, "Holi," which the latter did. Mr. Ross introduced the learned Sannyâsin to Mr. Pennington, the District Judge, who became so charmed with the Swami's learned exposition of Hindu religion and social customs that he asked him to go to England to preach these ideas. Then with still another gentleman, Colonel Rivett-Carnac, the Swami had a lengthy discussion on Vedântism. At this time the Swami rose to his very highest moods. The spirit of the preacher in him was aroused, and he spoke with power and luminous insight.

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[1] *Complete Works,* Vol. IV, p. 229—Sketch of the Life of Pavhari Baba.

At Ghazipur the Swami was in regular correspondence with Akhandananda who was sending him interesting descriptions of the Tibetans. The Swami wrote to his brother disciple explaining the philosophy of the Tântrik rites and the Buddhistic doctrines. Naren was a great admirer of Buddha and would have liked to go to Tibet to study the Buddhistic scriptures. To this end he suggested to Akhandananda that he should come to Ghazipur and that from there they would set out together for Tibet via Nepal where one of his friends was private tutor to H. H. the Maharaja. It would be easy for them to penetrate into Tibet with the officers of the Nepalese Government who went annually to Lhassa under the protection of the Nepal State.

But now one turns from the group of the European and Indian listeners and from the eloquence of the monk to the silence and inner workings of the Swami's own mind. At all times he was afflicted with a spiritual dissatisfaction and restlessness. He was always seeking, always striving and always analysing. In a solitary lemon-garden, said to be haunted, he practised the severest Sâdhanâ; in spite of his ill health, he made efforts to plunge his soul into the highest Reality.

In the spiritual evolution of Naren two parallel lines of thought are seen at work at this period of his life. In the conscious plane he was filled with the desire to realise the highest Truth and remain immersed in Samâdhi. All other ideals appeared insignificant to him in comparison. While this mood was uppermost he felt a great spiritual unrest, the like of which he had experienced only at the Cossipore garden-house during the closing days of Sri Ramakrishna's life. The zeal for the highest Samâdhi ate him up, as it were, day by day. In his intense restlessness to be merged in the Absolute, he had forgotten the words of the Master, "You have now tasted the highest realisation. For the present it is kept locked up and the key shall be with me. You have work to do. When you have finished that you will enter into this Samâdhi without a break." But in the unconscious plane of his mind another current of thought seemed to work with equal force. At such periods he was literally mad for the regeneration of his motherland. He would forgo the pleasure of the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi even, in order to work for the uplift of the masses. It was the mission and purpose of his life. His was not to be a life of asceticism and retirement but that of intense activity and self-immolation. He would be sternly reminded of this latter ideal, as if by an unseen power, when he concentrated all his energy in meditation.

Naren suffered at this time from various mental and physical agonies. Lumbago was giving him a good deal of trouble. Sometimes the pain in the loins made him frantic. "I know not," he writes "how I shall climb up the hills. I find that the Babaji has wonderful endurance, and that is why I go to him." He was greatly upset to learn that Abhedananda, his brother disciple, was suffering from repeated attacks of malaria at Hrishikesh. The Swami sent a wire from Ghazipur to know if he needed him. "Well," he writes to Pramadadas Babu, "you may smile, sir, to see me weaving all this web of Mâyâ,—and that is, no doubt, the fact. But then there is the chain of iron and there is the chain of gold. Much good comes of the latter, and it drops off by itself when all the good is reaped. The sons of my Master are, indeed, the great objects of my service, and here alone I feel I have some duty left for me." But a week later he writes to Pramadadas Babu again, "You know not, sir,—I am a very soft-natured man in spite of the stern Vedântic views I hold. And this proves to be my undoing. At the slightest touch I give way. For howsoever I may try to think only of my own good, I begin, in spite of myself, to think of other people's interests." He had set out this time with a stern resolve to carry out his own plans, but he had to give them up at the news of the illness of a brother at Allahabad. And now came this news from Hrishikesh. No reply had come as yet to his telegram to Hrishikesh. He was in a quandary between his monastic yearnings and his love and sense of responsibility for his brother disciples. What system of Yoga would be best to make it possible to remain serene in the midst of all these disturbing phenomena and to help him to concentrate on the Brahman? That was his constant thought. It was to learn this Yoga that he went to the Babaji.

But the Babaji, too, was proving difficult and showed no disposition to pass on to Naren the knowledge he craved. To all Naren's importunities he was deaf. At last the Swami decided that if it were necessary in order to learn the Yoga he desired, he would be initiated by Pavhari Baba. To such lengths would he have gone in his determination to attain the thing he sought. No sooner had his decision been made than Sri Ramakrishna appeared before him and looked intensely into his eyes, without a word. Through a mist of tears Naren saw words of power, divinity, love and insight. He was abashed, overcome by self-reproach. And yet the struggle continued for days thereafter. Many times he resolved to become the disciple of Pavhari Baba in spite of his vision, but the vision of Sri Ramakrishna recurred, and other things happened, of which the Swami never spoke. So he gave up the idea. In the end it was Sri Ramakrishna who was triumphant. Long after the Swami composed a song in Bengali entitled, "A song I sing to Thee" in which one finds a glimpse of this experience.[1]

The Swami understood Sri Ramakrishna after this. He saw clearly that the Master was the fulfilment of spirituality that one who had sat at his feet and been blessed by him, stood in need of no other spiritual help. He wrote to Pramadadas Babu, referring to Pavhari Baba, "But now I see the whole matter is inverted in its bearings! While I myself came as a beggar to his door, he in turn wanted to learn of me! This saint perhaps, is not yet perfected, —too much of rituals, vows and observances, and too much self-concealment. The ocean in its fullness cannot be contained within its shores, I am sure. So it is not good, I have decided, to disturb this Sâdhu for nothing and very soon I shall take leave of him. . . .

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[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. IV, p. 444.

"To no great one am I going again. . . . So, now, the great conclusion is that Ramakrishna has no peer; nowhere else in this world exists such unprecedented perfection, such wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, such intense sympathy for man in bondage. Either he must be the Avatâra as he himself used to say, or else the ever-perfect divine man, whom the Vedânta speaks of as the free one, who assumes the body for the good of humanity. This is my conviction, sure and certain,—and the worship of such a divine man has been referred to by Patanjali in the aphorism, 'Or the goal may be attained by meditating on the pure soul of a saint.'

"Never during his life did he refuse a single prayer of mine. Millions of offences has he forgiven me. Such great love even my parents never had for me. There is no poetry, no exaggeration in all this. It is the bare truth and every disciple of his knows it. In times of great danger, great temptation, I have wept in extreme agony with the prayer, 'O God, save me,' and no response came; but this wonderful saint, or Avatâra, or whatever you may wish to call him, knew, through his power of insight into the human heart, of all my afflictions and removed them, in spite of myself, by bringing me to him."

The Swami was satisfied; no more was his mind distracted and soon he was able to give himself over to single-minded meditation. These occurrences are not indicative of any loss of faith in his Master, as the excerpt given below from a letter to Akhandananda shows: "My motto is to learn to recognise good, no matter where I may come across it. This leads my friends to think that I may lose my devotion to the Guru. These are ideas of lunatics and bigots. For all Gurus are one, fragments and radiations of God, the Universal Guru." That the Swami's idea was only to learn Râja Yoga from Pavhari Baba is clear from an earlier portion of the same letter. He writes, "Our Bengal is the land of Bhakti and Jnâna, Yoga is scarcely mentioned there. What little there is, is but the queer breathing exercises of the Hatha Yoga—which is nothing but a kind of gymnastics. Therefore I am staying with this Râja-yogin—and he has given me some hope." Premananda was one of those who had mistaken Naren's devotion to Pavhari Baba for disloyalty to Sri Ramakrishna and he had come to Ghazipur to persuade Naren to go to Benares. Naren was very harsh with him and sent him away. He was not going to be overpowered any more by his love for his Gurubhais. He went away from Ghazipur to some distant village to meditate for days together without telling them where he was going. He wrote to Abhedananda to come to Benares and requested Pramadadas Babu to look after him. He asked Akhandananda to cease wandering in the Himalayas and either to settle at some place of his choice or to return to the Math at Baranagore.

But the persistent rumours of the illness of Abhedananda compelled him at last to go to Benares. This fitted in with his plans, for he had in his mind for some time the secret desire to practise Tapasyâ at the holy city. He hurried to Benares as the guest of Pramadadas Babu. After making every arrangement for the care of Abhedananda, he settled himself in Pramadadas Babu's garden and devoted his entire time to the practice of austerities. While at Benares he received the heart-rending news of the passing away of Balaram Bose, the great householder devotee of the Master. He was plunged into a sea of grief. The memory of innumerable days of sweet companionship and of staunch friendship that crowded in upon him made him but lament the more. Pramadadas Babu was struck to see a monk, a strict Vedântist, so upset by death. But Naren said, "Please do not talk that way. We are not dry monks. What! Do you think that because a man is a Sannyâsin he has no heart!" And with the intention of bringing solace to the bereaved family, who were all devotees of the Master, and also to enquire into the affairs of the Math, Naren left Benares for Calcutta.

And now that he was back to that same old life of prayer and meditation which had obtained in the Baranagore monastery, he encouraged the monks, whom he loved with his whole heart, to live up to the ideal. All his extensive learning went towards the intellectual development of his Gurubhais. In giving up their university examinations and renouncing their degrees, the monks had in reality lost nothing. Indeed they were admitted to a richer intellectual life, for their Leader was in himself an encyclopædia of knowledge. Yet the Swami did not set himself up as a teacher. He would talk for hours, sometimes continuing the same subject for days, to the monks as they sat around him. There were no formal classes,—he was simply expressing himself.

The presence of Naren was sorely needed at the Baranagore Math, for since the passing of Suresh Chandra Mitra on the 25th May, 1890, the brotherhood was in great financial difficulties. There was, sometimes, a great scarcity of food, but they were upheld by the power of meditation and prayer. Naren was the compelling guide, the leader in it all. He set their souls on fire with the memory of the Master's words and the thrilling stories of his own life as a wanderer.

At this time he was assailed by the thought that something should be done to perpetuate the memory of Sri Ramakrishna in Bengal, the land of his birth—

the erection, for instance, of a suitable temple on the bank of the Ganges in his name. Apropos of this he wrote a beautiful letter to Pramadadas Babu from Baranagore dated the 26th May, 1890, from which we give below some extracts.

"For various reasons, the body of Sri Ramakrishna had to be consigned to fire. There is no doubt that this act was very blamable. His ashes, however, have been preserved, and if they be now properly enshrined somewhere on the bank of the Ganges, I presume we shall be able, in some measure, to expiate the sin lying on our heads. . . .

"What greater regret can there be than this that no memorial in this land of Bengal in the neighbourhood of the place of his Sâdhanâ has as yet been raised in honour of him by whose birth the race of the Bengalees has been sanctified, the land of Bengal has become hallowed, who came on earth to save the Indians from the spell of the worldly glamour of Western culture, and who therefore chose most of his all-renouncing monks from university men?

". . . . Suresh Babu had offered a sum of Rs. 1000 for the purpose, promising to give more, but for some inscrutable purpose of God he left this world yester-night! And the news of Balaram Babu's death is already known to you.

"Now there is no knowing as to where his disciples will go with his sacred remains and his seat (you know well people here in Bengal are profuse in their professions, but do not stir out an inch in practice). The disciples are Sannyâsins and are ready forthwith to depart anywhere their way may lie. But I, their servant, am in agony, and my heart is breaking to think that a small piece of land could not be had in which to install the remains of Bhagavân Ramakrishna."

He begged Pramadadas Babu to raise a subscription from his friends there and thus help in the erection of the memorial. "I am," the letter continues, "Sri Ramakrishna's servant and am willing even to steal and rob, if by doing so I can perpetuate his name on the land of his birth and Sâdhanâ and help even a little his disciples to practise his great ideals. . . . It would be the greatest pity if the memorial shrine could not be raised on the land of his birth and Sâdhanâ! The condition of Bengal is pitiable. The people here are unable even to dream what renunciation truly means,—only luxury, sensuality and selfishness are eating into the vitals of the race. May God infuse renunciation and unworldliness into this land!" But even in the midst of the training of his brother disciples and his plans for raising a memorial to the Master, the spirit of restlessness seized him anew! And this time it drew him away for years from the Baranagore Math and his Gurubhais. Day by day he knew he was being drawn into a web of relationships and responsibilities, and calls on his time and attention were coming from all sides. All these were interfering with his taking up the life of the itinerant monk and his purpose, through just such a life, of becoming more confident of himself and the message he was to give. He must settle down; he must give himself up to contemplation; he must solve all the problems of the soul, and of the land he was born in. And therefore after two months' stay in the monastery he started out in July, 1890 with the same old determination,—never to return. This time the Swami intended to make the pilgrimage to the Himalayas from which Swami Akhandananda had just returned, with tales of marvellous interest and descriptions of far-off Tibet and beauteous Kashmir; with glowing accounts of the Tibetan lamasaries and of the grandeurs of Kedarnath. Naren said to him, "You are my man! You have faith! Come, let us be off together!" In a letter to a fellow monk, dated the 6th July, 1890, the Swami wrote: "I intend shortly, as soon as I can get a portion of my fare, to go up to Almora and thence to some place in Garhwal on the Ganges where I can settle down for a long meditation. Gangadhar is accompanying me. Indeed, it was with this desire and intention that I brought him down from Kashmir. . . . I am longing for a flight to the Himalayas."

He said to his Gurubhais, "I shall not return until I acquire such realisation that my very touch will transform a man." Before leaving Calcutta he went to Ghusuree, a village across the Ganges, where he sought out the Holy Mother to receive her blessings. And he told her, "Mother, I shall not return until I have attained the highest Jnânam!" The Holy Mother blessed him in the name of the Master. She said, "My son, will you not see your own mother at home before leaving?" And he answered, "Mother, you alone are my mother!" And seeing his spirit, the Holy Mother again blessed him.

XIV

WANDERINGS IN THE HIMALAYAS

Thus one sees the Swami, restless and impatient, ridding his heart of all attachment, to fulfil his purpose. From the moment he left Calcutta he was happy. The solitude, the village air, the seeing of new places, the meeting with new people and the getting rid of old impressions and of worry delighted him. The first place at which he and Akhandananda halted for some days was Bhâgalpur. They were, at first, the guests of Kumâr Nityânanda Sinha, who perceived after conversation that they were highly educated and one of them was marvellously gifted. From there they went to the house of Manmatha Nâth Choudhury, the private tutor to the Kumar. Babu Mathura Nath Sinha, a pleader, who was then in Bhagalpur wrote a letter afterwards reminiscent of his meeting with the Swamis in which he says:

> " The very sight of them prepossessed me in their favour. I remembered to have seen one of them, who later on became renowned as the Swami Vivekananda, in my college days at Calcutta, as often leading the choir at the Sâdhâran Brâhmo Samâj. My conversation with him covered much ground, including literature, philosophy and religion, principally the latter two. It seemed that learning and philosophy were as the very air which he breathed. I discovered that the soul of his teaching was an intense and unselfish patriotism with which he invested and vivified his subjects. This was an abiding characteristic with him. When I read the glowing descriptions of the success he won at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, I felt that in him India had found her man."

Manmatha Babu, whose guest the two Swamis were at Bhagalpur, was a staunch Brâhmo. The

Swami explained to him the many aspects of Hindu religion and impressed him by his interpretation of the various episodes of Sri Krishna's life. In June, 1906, Manmatha Babu wrote to a disciple of the Swami:

" One morning in August of the year 1890, Swami Vivekananda with Swami Akhandananda came unexpectedly to my house. Thinking them to be ordinary Sâdhus, I did not pay them much attention. We were sitting together after our noonday meal; and believing them to be ignorant, I did not enter into conversation with them, but began to read an English translation of a work on Buddhism. After a while, Swamiji asked me what book I was reading. In reply, I told him the title of the book and asked, ' Do you know English?' He replied, ' Yes, a little.' Then I conversed with him on Buddhism, but after a short time, I found out that he was a thousand times more learned than I. He quoted from many English works, and Babu Mathura Nath Sinha of Danapur and myself were astonished at his learning and listened to him with rapt attention. . . . .

" One day Swamiji asked me if I practised any special Sâdhanâs, and we conversed on the practice of Yoga for a long time. From this I was convinced that he was not a common man, as what he said of Yoga was exactly the same as that which I had heard from the Swami Dayânanda Sarasvati. Besides, he gave out many other important things on the subject which I had not heard before.

" Then, to test his knowledge of Sanskrit, I brought out all the Upanishads that I had with me and questioned him on many abstruse passages from them. By his illuminating replies I found that his mastery of the scriptures was of an extraordinary kind. And the way in which he recited from the Upanishads was charming. Thus, being firmly convinced of his wonderful knowledge equally in English, Sanskrit and in Yoga, I was greatly drawn towards him. Though he stayed in my house for only seven days, I became so devoted to him that I resolved in my mind that by no means whatever would I let him go elsewhere. So I strongly urged him to live always at Bhagalpur.

" Once I noticed him humming a tune to himself. So I asked him if he could sing. He replied, ' Very little.' Being pressed hard by us he sang, and what was my surprise to see that as in learning so in music he had wonderful accomplishment! Next day I asked him if he were willing that I should invite some singers and musicians; he consented and I asked many musicians, several of whom were *ostads*, or adepts in the art, to come. Believing that the music would end by nine or ten at the latest, I did not arrange for supper for the guests. Swamiji sang without ceasing till two or three o'clock in the morning. All without exception were so charmed, that they forgot hunger and thirst and all idea of time! None moved from his seat or thought of going home. Kailash Babu, who was accompanying the Swami in his songs, was forced to give up finally for his fingers had become stiff and had lost all sensation. Such superhuman power I have never seen in anybody, nor do I expect to see it again. The next evening, all the guests of the previous night, and many others, presented themselves without any invitation. The player on the instrument also came, but Swamiji did not sing that evening. So everyone was disappointed.

" Another day I proposed to introduce him to all the rich men of Bhagalpur, and that I myself would take him to them in my carriage so that it would not be any trouble to him. But he declined and said, ' It is not the Sannyâsin's Dharma to visit the rich!' His fiery renunciation made a deep impression on me. Indeed, in his company I was taught many lessons which have always remained with me as spiritual ideals.

" From my boyhood, I was inclined to live in some solitary place and perform Sâdhanâs. When I met Swamiji, this desire grew strong. I often told him, ' Let us both go to Vrindavan, and depositing three hundred rupees for each of us in the temple of Sri Govindaji we shall have as food Govindaji's Prasâd for the rest of our lives. Thus, without being a burden to anyone, we shall practise devotion day and night in a sequestered spot on the banks of the holy Jamuna!' In reply to this he said, ' Yes, for a special temperament or nature, this scheme is no doubt good, but not for all,' meaning himself, who had renounced everything. Amongst his many new ideas, the two most impressive to me were:

" ' Whatever of the ancient Aryan knowledge, intellect and genius is still left can be mostly found in those parts which lie near the banks of the Ganges. The further one goes from the Ganges, the less one sees them. This convinces one of the greatness of the Ganges as sung in our scriptures.

" 'The epithet mild Hindu, instead of being a word of reproach ought really to point to our glory, as expressing greatness of character. For, see how much moral and spiritual advancement and how much development of the qualities of love and compassion have to be acquired before one can get rid of the brutish force of his nature, which actuates the ruining and the slaughter of one's brother-men for self-aggrandisement!. . . .'

" Swamiji fully knew in his heart that I would not willingly or easily let him depart from Bhagalpur. So, one day when I was away on some important business, he grasped this opportunity of leaving, after taking farewell of those at home. When I came back I made a strenuous search for him, but could discover no clue of him anywhere. And yet, why should I have thought that my will would avail! Why should Swamiji be like a frog in the well, when his field of work was the whole wide world!

" He had expressed to me his intention of going to the Badarikâshrama. Therefore, after he had left Bhagalpur, I even went up to Almora in the Himalayas in search of him. There Lala Badri Sah told me that he had left Almora some time before; and knowing that he must have already journeyed a long way in the direction of the Northern Tirtha, I was compelled to give up my idea of following him.

" It was my heart's desire to bring him once more to Bhagalpur after his return from America, but he could not come, having then perhaps very little leisure or opportunity to do so."

At the instance of Akhandananda, the Swami next visited Vaidyanâth. Here they went to see Babu Râj Nârâyan Bose, the venerable old Brâhmo preacher. The Swami had instructed his Gurubhai not to let Raj Narayan Babu know that he knew English. In the course of conversation many topics arose that required the use of English words, as for example "plus"; but the Swami surmounted the difficulty by making the plus sign by crossing his fingers. Not once did the old gentleman dream that the young monk before him spoke English as fluently as his own mother tongue. Much later, when the

Swami's name became famous throughout the length and breadth of India, Raj Narayan Babu discovered that it was he who had visited him years ago and remembered his meeting with him. He said in surprise, "I thought he did not know English!" After passing the night with him, the monks started for Benares on the following day.

At Benares, the Swami stayed with his friend Pramadadas Babu, with whom he spent hours in the discussion of scriptural topics. He was very eager to see the snow-capped Himalayas, and so did not prolong his stay at Benares. As he was taking leave of Pramada Babu he said, "When I shall return here next time I shall burst upon society like a bomb-shell, and it will follow me like a dog!" And he did not return to this sacred city until he had verily stirred up the world to new modes of thought and resurrected the spirit of the Indian sages.

At the insistence of Akhandananda, the Swami next went to Ayodhya and to the Ashrama of Jânakivar Saran, a Sanskrit and Persian scholar, the Mohunt of a local temple with vast estates. The Swami was much impressed with his learning and spiritual fervour and remarked to his brother disciple, "I have seen a man, a real holy man!"

Next, one sees the Swami and his Gurubhai as the guests of Râm Prasanna Bhattâchârya in Nainital, where they remained for about a fortnight. Then they left for Almora on their way to Badarikashrama, determined to walk all the way without a pice. On the third day they stopped for the night near a watermill by the side of a stream. An aged Peepul tree stood on the bank of the flowing stream; after his bath, the Swami repaired to the tree and sat there for about an hour absorbed in meditation. Then he said to his companion, "Well, Gangadhar, here under this banyan tree one of the greatest problems of my life has been solved.'' Then he told of his wonderful vision about the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm. What the Swami entered in a fragmentary way in his note book on that day, is given here, in translation, as it was found, verbatim. From this one may get a glimpse of his trend of thought and realisation. It reads:

''In the beginning was the Word, etc.

''The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the Universal Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe. Sivâ (Kâli)[1] is embracing Siva; this is not a fancy. This covering of the one (Soul) by the other (Nature) is analogous to the relation between an idea and the word expressing it: they are one and the same, and it is only by a mental abstraction that one can distinguish them. Thought is impossible without words. Therefore, in the beginning was the Word, etc.

''This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally Formed and the Eternally Formless.''

When the monks arrived at Almora, Akhandananda took the Swami to the garden of Ambâ Dutt, whilst he himself went to inform Saradananda and Vaikunthanath of their arrival. These two brother disciples had been in the Himalayas for some time. When they learned of the Swami's presence they hastened to the garden-house of Amba Dutt to greet him. They were half way to the place, when they met the Swami himself coming to see them. Lâlâ

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[1] Sivâ, etc.—The reference is to the Tântrika conception of Kâli embracing Siva. Kâli is the Mother of the universe, and Siva, Her Divine Spouse.

Badri Sâh, who was their host and one of the party, welcomed the Swami to his home. Here he had a long discussion with one Sri Krishna Joshi, the Sheristadar, on the necessity of renouncing the world. The court-officer was struck with his power of eloquence and learning. The Swami was much impressed with Badri Sah's devotion and hospitality and remarked that he had rarely seen a devotee like him. Terrible news reached the Swami here. A telegram came from his brother telling of the suicide of one of his sisters. A letter which followed gave details. This caused the Swami great anguish of heart; and yet even in this grief he saw other realities. Through this perspective of personal woe he seemed to have been rudely awakened to the great problems of Indian womanhood. He now decided to travel into the wilder mountains. The situation was a peculiar one, a mingling of the domestic and monastic consciousness; but the balance of thought and determination swung with power in the latter direction.

Therefore he left in company with Saradananda, Akhandananda and Vaikuntha, with a coolie to carry their load, and turned his steps towards Garhwal. On the way Akhandananda suffered greatly from severe cough. The party reached Karnaprayâg on the way to Badarikashrama. There they had to halt for three days, at the end of which time they gave up the idea of going up to Kedarnâth and Badarikashrama as the road was closed by the Government on account of famine. After leaving Karnaprayag, the Swami and Akhandananda were taken ill with fever whilst staying in a Chati, or halting place for pilgrims. They remained at the Chati until they sufficiently recovered to go on, and at the end of a week the party proceeded to Rudraprayâg. The scenery in these parts is beautiful beyond description, with its waterfalls, streams, wild forests and its perfect peace and solitude. The invigorating atmosphere buoyed up the spirit of the Swami and the occasional glimpses of the eternal snows gladdened his heart. At Rudraprayag they met a Bengali monk, Purnânanda by name, with whom they spent the night. A short distance from Rudraprayag, in a Dharmasâla (a resting place) the Swami and Akhandananda were again attacked with high fever, this time so severely that they were unable to continue their journey. Fortunately, they met the Sadar Amin of the Garhwal District, Badri Dutt Joshi, who was on tour and encamped there. Seeing the suffering of the two monks he gave them some Ayurvedic medicines and when they were sufficiently improved to be moved, sent them by Dândi to Srinagar, nine miles off. There they gradually recovered. The monks were now one hundred and twenty miles from Almora, which distance had been covered in a little more than two weeks. In spite of their repeated illness their time had been spent in wandering slowly up the mountain paths, begging their food, meditating and holding religious conversations.

At Srinagar the monks dismissed the coolie and took up their abode in a lonely hut by the banks of the Alakanandâ river in which Swami Turiyananda had once lived. Here they stayed about a month, living on Mâdhukari Bhikshâ, which means, literally, the food procured by begging from house to house even as a bee collects honey from different flowers. During these journeys, as well as at Srinagar, the Swami instructed the Gurubhais in the teachings of the principal Upanishads excepting the Chhândogya and the Brihadâranyaka. The days passed away very happily in prayer, meditation and scriptural study. At Srinagar he met a schoolmaster, by caste a Vaisya, who was a recent convert to Christianity. The Swami spoke to him so eloquently of the glories of Hinduism that he returned to the Sanâtana Dharma and became greatly attached to the monks.

From Srinagar they next moved to Tehri. At Tehri they found two rooms in a deserted garden meant for wandering monks. Here on the bank of the sacred Ganges they lived on Mâdhukari Bhikshâ and spent most of their time in meditation and prayer.

After a time, they became acquainted with Babu Raghunâth Bhattâchârya, the Dewan of the Tehri Raj and an elder brother of Pandit Haraprasâd Sâstri of Calcutta. The Swami stayed with him for a few days. He was still eager to find a suitable place for meditation on the bank of the Ganges. The Dewan offered to help and even made suitable arrangements to enable him to do so in Ganeshprayag at the confluence of the Ganges and the Vilangana rivers. These plans had to be altered; for, on the very day they were completed, Akhandananda again fell ill, this time, of cold and examination of his chest by a local physician showed that his lungs were affected and he was advised to move immediately to the plains for systematic treatment. The doctor was of opinion that the winter in the hills which was fast approaching would be too severe for the patient. Though everything was settled to go to Ganeshprayag, the Swami immediately changed his plans and went at once to the Dewan to explain the reason for the change and said that he would avail himself of his kindness some time in the future. The Dewan gave him a letter of introduction to the Civil Surgeon of Dehra-Dun and provided two ponies to take Swami and Akhandananda to Mussooree besides meeting the other necessary expenses of the way. So, for the sake of his Gurubhai whom Sri Ramakrishna had entrusted to his care, the Swami, after about a month's stay at Tehri, went to Dehra-Dun, many miles away. Akhandananda writes, "I have heard the Swami say times without number that whenever he desired to retire into the life of silence and austerity, he was compelled by the pressure of circumstances to give it up."

Leaving Tehri, the monks went to Râjpur, by way of Mussooree. Here they met Swami Turiyananda, who joined the party. Immediately at Dehra-Dun Swami Akhandananda was taken to have his chest examined by Dr. Maclaren, the Civil Surgeon, to whom the Swami had brought a letter of introduction from the Dewan of Tehri. Careful examination found the patient to be suffering from a slight attack of bronchitis. Doctor Maclaren advised him to live in the plains and to take proper medical treatment. But some sort of shelter had to be found for the sick monk. So the Swami himself set out about the town of Dehra-Dun in search of a suitable place, enquiring at many houses saying, "My Gurubhai is ill! Can you give him a little place in your house and arrange for suitable diet for him?" But he only received cold-hearted replies and excuses. At last Pandit Ananda Nârâyan, a Kâshmiri Brâhmin and a vakil of the town, took charge of the sick monk. He rented a small house for him and provided suitable diet and warm clothing. The others stayed elsewhere and lived on Bhikshâ.

The Swami remained at Dehra-Dun for about three weeks, and after advising Akhandananda to go to a friend's house at Allahabad, he with the others went to Hrishikesh. Instead, Akhandananda, while visiting a friend at Saharanpur on his way to Allahabad took his advice and went to Meerut to consult Dr. Trailokya Nath Ghose, under whose treatment he remained for a month and a half.

The Swami went on to Hrishikesh, the place hallowed by Hindu legend and story. It is a picturesque and secluded spot, situated at the foot of the Himalayas, in a valley surrounded by hills and almost encircled by the Ganges. The whole place is monastic; the very air is pure and holy. Thousands of Yogins and Sannyâsins of diverse sects assemble there every year to spend the winter in reading the scriptures and practising Yoga and meditation. In those days it was a jungle, covered with groves, wild plum shrubs, bushes of wild flowers and evergreens, and dotted here and there with thatched cottages raised by the Sâdhus for their habitations.

The Swami and his Gurubhais stayed there for some time, dwelling in a hut near the temple of Chandeswar Mahâdeva, and living on Mâdhukari Bhikshâ. Again the desire to perform severe Sâdhanâs arose in the Swami; but as ill luck would have it, his intention was frustrated by severe illness attended with high fever and delirium. He grew worse and worse until he became unconscious and almost pulseless as he lay on his rude bed composed of a couple of coarse blankets spread on the ground. Overwhelmed with grief and anxiety his brethren were at a loss to know what to do. In those days help could be found only at a great distance. They were in the utmost agony of mind, when a native of the hills appeared on the scene. He prescribed an indigenous medicine which, mixed with honey, was forced into the Swami's mouth. Happily, it proved to be efficacious and the Gurubhais were much relieved.

That experience made the Gurubhais realise just, who and what he was to them. If he should die, they thought, they would be friendless and alone in the world; without him the world would be a wilderness. When he recovered the Gurubhais took him to Hardwâr, near at hand. Swami Brahmananda came from Kankhal where he had been staying, and all of them went to Saharanpur, visiting the house of Banku Behâri Babu, a local pleader. When they learned that Akhandananda was in Meerut, they immediately went to that place.

The monks found Akhandananda at the residence of Dr. Trailokya Nath Ghose. Akhandananda was very eager to see the Leader, but was frightened when he saw the ravages that illness had made on him. "I had never seen him thinner," he said, "he was worn to a shadow. It seemed that he had not as yet recovered from his terrible illness at Hrishikesh." For fifteen days the two monks remained with the physician, whilst the other brethren stayed at the house of Yajneswar Babu, who later on embraced the monastic life and became known as Swami Jnânânanda, the leader of the Bhârat Dharma Mahâmandal. Afterwards, all the brothers went to live together in the Settji's garden, the proprietor of which was a friend of Yajneswar Babu. The Leader was still taking medicine to counteract the havoc wrought by the illness, and to control the persistent and frequent attacks of fever. There is no doubt that the austerities practised during his wanderings and haphazard eating had weakened him greatly. But at Meerut he gradually grew stronger.

While in the Settji's garden, Swami Akhandananda brought to him an acquaintance, an Afghan gentleman who chanced to be a refugee Sardar and a relative of the Amir Abdar Rahaman of Afghanistan. This gentleman was as punctilious as the Hindus themselves in approaching a Sâdhu, performing his ablutions in advance and bringing a basket of sweetmeats carried by a Hindu servant for presenting to the Swami. He was amongst the first of large numbers who came to see the Swami. In fact, this garden at Meerut was beginning to seem like a miniature Baranagore monastery, for here with the Leader were Swamis Brahmananda, Akhandananda, Turiyananda, Saradananda, Vaikunthanath, and one day Swami Advaitananda joined the party. The Swami was now fully restored to health and vigour, and every day he read to them after the noonday meal from the Sanskrit classics, interpreting and explaining the texts in a masterly way. Mrichhakatika, Abhijnâna Sakuntalâ and Kumâra Sambhava as well as the Vishnu Purâna were the books taken up one after the other. The monks themselves held singing parties and kept up their devotional practices and meditation even as they did at Baranagore. In the evening they used to go to the parade ground to see the various outdoor sports of the soldiers. This was one of the happiest periods of their life.

Desirous of spending some time in intellectual pursuits, the Swami asked Akhandananda to get from the local library the works of Sir John Lubbock. The books were returned the next day, with the message that the Swami had finished them. The librarian refused to believe this, saying that it was impossible. Whereupon the Swami went to the library and said, "Sir, I have mastered the whole of them; if you doubt it you may put any question to me about them." After a few questions the librarian was convinced that he had been in error and his astonishment was great. Later Swami Akhandananda asked, "Swamiji, how did you do it?" The Leader replied, "I never read a book word for word. I read sentence by sentence, sometimes even paragraph by paragraph in a sort of kaleidoscopic form."

After a stay in Meerut for about five months, the Swami again grew restless. He remembered the life of freedom of the stern ascetics in the neighbourhood of Hardwar and Hrishikesh. "I saw many great men in Hrishikesh," said the Swami in later life. "One case that I remember was that of a man who seemed to be mad. He was coming nude down the street, with boys pursuing and throwing stones at him. The whole man was bubbling over with laughter, while blood was streaming down his face and neck. I took him and bathed his wound, putting ashes (made by burning a piece of cotton cloth) on it to stop the bleeding. And all the time, with peals of laughter, he told me of the fun the boys and he had been having, throwing the stones. 'So the Father plays,' he said.

"Many of these holy men hide in order to guard themselves against intrusion. People are a trouble to them. One had human bones strewn about his cave and gave it out that he lived on corpses. Another threw stones, and so on." The Swami continued, "The Sannyâsin needs no longer to worship or to go on pilgrimage or perform austerities. What then, is the motive of all this going from pilgrimage to pilgrimage, shrine to shrine, and austerity to austerity? He is acquiring merit, and giving it to the world!"[1] Yes, such a life was calling the Leader, if not in all the severity of its outward form, at least in its spirit, its desire for realisation and for solitude. His longing to see the Lord and receive His commands became so great that his Gurubhais were overcome with awe. For the Swami told them at Meerut that he had decided on the immediate course he was going to follow, that he knew already his mission. He had received the command of God regarding his future and told the monks that he was going to leave them in order to become the solitary monk. When Akhandananda begged to be taken along with him he said, "The attachment of Gurubhais is also Mâyâ! If you fall ill I must look after you and in case of my illness you must attend me. Thus one is hindered in one's resolutions and attainment of the goal. I am determined to have no longer any form of Mâyâ about me!" And so, one morning in the latter part of January, 1891, he left his devoted brethren and journeyed on to Delhi by himself.

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[1] Sister Nivedita: *The Master as I saw him.* pp. 239-241.

XV

IN HISTORIC RAJPUTANA

The Swami, with his scanty belongings and royal bearing, under the assumed name of Vividishânanda entered Delhi, the city of sovereign memories. The crisp air, the grandeur of the place, its memories, its history, its atmosphere, filled him with physical and spiritual elation. He put up at the residence of Syâmaldâs who received him with open arms.

Here in Delhi he went everywhere and saw everything. The royal sepulchres and palaces, the deserted sites of capitals, the ruins of royal and imperial greatness impressed the young monk with the ephemeral nature of all human glory and the permanence of the spirit which knows neither coming nor going. At the same time, the historian in him found in Delhi the symbol of the immortal glory of the Indian people, and its grand but composite culture.

In the meantime some of the Gurubhais that were left at Meerut started for Delhi. At Delhi the brother disciples soon discovered their beloved Leader, who was glad to see them. They said, "We did not know that you were staying here. We have come to Delhi to see only the old Imperial Capital. Here we heard of one Swami Vividishananda, an English-speaking monk. We were curious to see him and it is by mere accident that we met you." The Swami replied, "My brethren, I have said that I desire to be left alone. I have asked you not to follow me. This I repeat once more. I do not want to be followed. Herewith I leave Delhi. No one must follow me or try to know my whereabouts. I demand that you obey me. I am going to cut myself off from all old associations. Whithersoever the spirit leads, there shall I wander. It matters not whether it is a forest or a desert waste, a mountain region or a densely populated city. I am off. I wish every one to strive for his own goal according to his light.'' Still the Swami lingered on at Delhi, and though he lived apart from the Gurubhais they ate together. One day Dr. Hem Chandra Sen, a well-known Bengali physician of Delhi, spoke slightingly about Swami to Akhandananda. A few days back when the Swami had consulted him about his tonsil his attitude seemed pronouncedly antagonistic. The doctor, however, expressed a desire to Akhandananda to meet the Leader again. One evening many professors of the local college assembled at the Doctor's house and the Swami and his two brother disciples were invited. A great discussion ensued. Many questions were asked and the Swami with his vast erudition impressed them all. Thereafter Dr. Sen became much attached to the small group of monks, and he invited them the following day to a feast at his house. After the brother disciples left for Ghaziabad the Swami set out for Rajputânâ. His soul was in the grip of a great restlessness and desire to attain the goal for which he had been born. He knew instinctively that the time to start his great mission was nearing; that it was the guidance of the Master, the will of the Mother, that he should seek solitude. He was glad to be cut off from his beloved brethren—the last attachment of his soul. He remembered the words of the Dhammapada:

> ''Go forward without a path!
> Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,

Wander alone, like the rhinoceros!
Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
Even as the wind, not caught in the net,
Even as the lotus leaf, unstained by the water,
Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros!"[1]

The great strength of these words upheld and inspired him. Renouncing all ties, loosing all bondages, breaking down all limitations, destroying all sense of fear, the Swami went forth, even as the rhinoceros,—towards Alwâr, in the beautiful and historic land of Rajputana.

One morning in the beginning of February, 1891, the Swami alighted from the train at the Alwar railway station. Walking along the public road, fringed with gardens and verdant fields, and passing a row of beautiful mansions, he finally arrived at the State Dispensary, where stood a Bengali gentleman, Guru Charan Laskar, who proved to be the doctor in charge. The Swami inquired of him in Bengali if there was a place where Sannyâsins could put up. The doctor, who was impressed by the remarkable appearance of the monk, bowed low before him, and joyfully accompanied him to the Bazar where he showed him a room in the upper story of one of the shops and said, "This is for Sannyâsins, sir! Will you make yourself comfortable here for the present?" "Gladly!" responded the Swami. Seeing to the Swami's immediate needs, the doctor hastened to the house of a Mohammedan friend, a teacher of Urdu and Persian in the High School and said, "O Moulavi Sahib! A Bengali dervish has just arrived! Come immediately and see him! I have never seen such a Mahâtmâ before! Please talk with him while I finish my work, and I shall join you presently." Both hurried to the Bazar, and taking their shoes off entered the bare room in which the Swami had arranged his belongings, consisting of a few books tied up in a blanket, a piece of yellow cloth, a Kamandalu and a staff, and saluted him with reverence.

The Swami called the Moulavi Sahib to his side and discoursed with much love on religious matters. Of the Koran, he said, "There is one thing very remarkable about the Koran. Even to this day, it exists as it was found eleven hundred years ago. It retains its pristine purity and is free from interpolations." Both the visitors were much impressed, and Guru Charan, on his return to his dispensary, spoke to everyone of "a great monk" who had just come. And those who heard the physician's words caught some of his enthusiasm and went to meet the Swami. The Moulavi likewise informed all his Moslem friends, who also came in numbers. Soon a great concourse of people gathered. The Swami's room and even the verandahs were crowded. The Swami's discourse was interspersed with the singing of Urdu songs, Hindi Bhajana, and sometimes Bengali Kirtana, and songs of the great devotees—Vidyâpati, Chandidâs and Râmaprasâd. Sometimes he recited passages from the Vedas and the Upanishads, from the Bible and the Purânas. Or he would inspire them spiritually with stories from the lives of saints like Buddha, Sankara, Râmânuja, Guru Nânak, Chaitanya, Tulsidâs, Kabir, and Râmakrishna, with which he used to illustrate his teachings of the scriptures.

After a few days, the number of devotees and admirers became so great that some well-to-do men of Alwar arranged that he should stay at the house of Pandit Sambhunâthji, a retired Engineer of the Alwar State. Here the Swami regulated his life, remaining by himself in prayer and meditation from early morning until the hour of nine, when he emerged from his room to find generally some twenty or thirty people of all castes, creeds and classes awaiting him. Some were Sunnis and Shiahs of the Mohammedan fold, some were Saivites and Vaishnavites. Some were men of wealth and position and learning, others were illiterate and poor. The Swami treated them all alike and answered their questions until noon. There was absolute freedom between him and those who came. If one asked an irrelevant question, such as, "Maharaj, to what caste does your body belong" even while he was explaining the highest metaphysical subject, he would immediately reply without any evidence of vexation, "It is Kâyastha!" Some monks would have evaded a direct reply, hoping to be taken for a Brâhmin, but the Swami was above all thought of caste. Again another would ask him, "Sir, why do you wear Geruâ?" To which he would reply, "Because it is the garb of beggars! Poor people would ask me for alms if I were to wear white clothes. Being a beggar myself most times I do not have even a single pice with me to give them, and it causes me pain to have to refuse one who begs of me. But seeing my Geruâ cloth, they understand that I am a beggar even as they are, and they would not think of begging from a beggar." This is a most original and touching explanation of his reason for wearing the Sannyâsin's robe, for the popular saying is, "Without Bhek, or a distinguishing garb of renunciation, no Bhikshâ, or alms, is available."

Sometimes the conversation would centre upon the blessedness of Mother-worship, and his heart would become so full that he could say nothing but "Mother! Mother!" At these times his chanting of Her name, which was at first loud and full, gradually became softer and softer as though it, too, were travelling with his soul—far, far away,—until finally it would die away; and from the Swami's closed eyes tears of joy would fall showing how very close was his spiritual communion with the Mother. And the devotees would share in his ecstasy and from their eyes too would flow tears of joy. In the afternoon, and particularly the evening, there would be the same ecstasy of song and prayer, and often many of those present would join with the Swami in songs of praise of the Lord. Days slipped by in this manner; all sense of time seemed to be lost! Sometimes the meetings would continue to midnight. He initiated some, giving them Mantras.

Among all his friends the Moulavi Sahib was one of the most devoted. He had a strong desire to invite him to his house and give him Bhikshâ. He thought, "Swamiji is a great dervish with no caste distinction. But then Panditji, with whom he is staying, may object." Nevertheless, he went to Panditji one evening, and with folded hands before all present said, "Do allow me to have the Bâbâji in my house for his meal to-morrow! To satisfy you all I will have all the furniture in my sitting-room washed by Brâhmins; the food which will be offered to Swamiji will be purchased and cooked by Brâhmins in the utensils brought from their homes." And he added, "This Yavana will be more than compensated if he can but see the Swami, at a distance, eating his food." The Moulavi spoke these words with such sincere humility that all present were impressed and Panditji clasped his hands in friendship saying, "My friend, Swamiji is a dervish! What is caste to him! There is no need to take such trouble. I, for my part, have no objection. Any arrangement you may make will satisfy us. Indeed, under such conditions as you propose, I myself can have no qualms of conscience in eating at your house, to say nothing of Swamiji who is a Mukta!" And so it happened that the Moulavi Sahib entertained the Swami in his own house and felt himself blessed. Many other devout Mohammedans followed the Moulavi's example and cordially invited the Swami to their homes also.

Some time later, Major Râmchandraji, the Dewan to the Maharaja of Alwar, chanced to hear of the presence of a great Sâdhu in the city, and invited him to his house. On better acquaintance he felt that the Swami would be a helpful influence for the Maharaja, Mangal Singhji, who had become much anglicised in thought and manners. He wrote to the Maharaja, who was at that time living in a palace some miles distant, saying, "A great Sâdhu with a stupendous knowledge of English is here." The very next day the Maharaja came to the Dewan's house, where he met the Swami and bowed down before him,[1] at the same time urging him to be seated.

The Maharaja opened the conversation with, "Well, Swamiji Maharaj, I hear that you are a great scholar. You can easily earn a handsome sum of money every month. Why then do you go about begging?" The Swami replied with a question which was a home thrust, "Maharaj, tell me why you spend your time constantly in the company of Westerners and go on shooting excursions and neglect your duties to the State." The courtiers who were present were taken aback. "What a bold Sâdhu! He will repent of this," they thought with bated breath. But the Maharaja took it calmly, and after a little thought replied, "I cannot say why, but no doubt because I like to!" "Well, for that very same reason do I wander about as a Fakir," the Swami exclaimed.

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[1] The Sannyâsins who have renounced the world belong to the fourth or highest state of social gradation in Hindu society and as such they are worthy of respect from even Princes.

The next question the Maharaja asked was, "Well, Babaji Maharaj, I have no faith in idol-worship. What is going to be my fate?" And he smiled as he spoke. The Swami seemed slightly annoyed and exclaimed, "Surely you are joking!" "No, Swamiji, not at all! You see, I really cannot worship wood, earth, stone or metal, like other people. Does this mean that I shall fare worse in the life hereafter?" The Swami answered, "Well, I suppose every man should follow his religious ideal according to his own faith!" The devotees of the Swami became perplexed at this reply, for they knew that the Swami sanctioned image-worship. But the Swami had not finished. His eyes alighted on a picture of the Maharaja which was hanging on the wall. At his expressed desire it was passed to him. Holding it in his hand he asked, "Whose picture is this?" The Dewan answered, "It is the likeness of our Maharaja." A moment later they trembled with fear when they heard the Swami commanding the Dewan to spit upon it. "Spit upon it!" commanded the Swami. "Any one of you may spit upon it. What is it but a piece of paper? What objection can you have to do so?" The Dewan was thunder-struck, and the eyes of all glanced in terror and awe from the Prince to the monk, from the monk to the Prince. But all the while the Swami insisted, "Spit upon it! I say, spit upon it!" And the Dewan in fear and bewilderment cried out, "What! Swamiji! What are you asking me to do? This is the likeness of our Maharaja! How can I do such a thing?" "Be it so," said the Swami, "but the Maharaja is not bodily present in this photograph. This is only a piece of paper. It does not contain his bones and flesh and blood. It does not speak or behave or move in any way as does the Maharaja. And yet all of you refuse to spit upon it, because you see in this photo the shadow of the Maharaja's form. Indeed, in spitting upon the photo, you feel that you insult your master, the Prince himself." Turning to the Maharaja he continued, "See, Your Highness, though this is not you in one sense, in another sense it is you. That was why your devoted servants were so perplexed when I asked them to spit upon it. It has a shadow of you; it brings you into their minds. One glance at it makes them see you in it! Therefore they look upon it with as much respect as they do upon your own person. Thus it is with the devotees who worship stone and metal images of gods and goddesses. It is because an image brings to their minds their Ishta, or some special form and attributes of the Divinity, and helps them to concentrate, that the devotees worship God in an image. They do not worship the stone or the metal as such. I have travelled to many places, but nowhere have I found a single Hindu worshipping an image, saying, 'O Stone! I worship Thee! O Metal! Be merciful to me!' Everyone is worshipping, O Maharaja, the same one God who is the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of Pure Knowledge. And God appears to all even according to their understanding and their representation of Him. Prince, I speak for myself! Of course, I cannot speak for you!" And Mangal Singh, who had been listening attentively all this time, said with folded hands, "Swamiji! I must admit that according to the light you have thrown upon image-worship, I have never yet met anyone who has worshipped stone, or wood, or metal. Heretofore I did not understand its meaning! You have opened my eyes! But what will be my fate? Have mercy on me!" The Swami answered, "O Prince, none but God can be merciful to one, and He is ever-merciful! Pray to Him. He will show His mercy unto you!"

After the Swami had taken leave, Mangal Singh remained thoughtful for a while and then said, "Dewanji, never have I come across such a Mahâtmâ! Make him stay with you for some time." The Dewan promised to do so, adding, "I will try my best; but I do not know if I shall succeed. He is a man of fiery and independent character." After many entreaties the Swami consented to live with the Dewan, but only under one condition, that all those poor and illiterate people who often came to him should have the right to see him freely whensoever they desired, even as the rich and those of higher positions. The Dewan readily agreed to this and the Swami consented to stay on with him.

Many of those who visited the Swami found their lives completely changed as the result of their contact with him. There was an old man, however, who came daily, constantly asking him for his blessings and his mercy. Accordingly the Swami instructed him in certain practices, but he would not follow them. Finally, the Swami became impatient with him, and one day seeing the man coming at a distance and wishing to get rid of him, he assumed an attitude of extreme reserve. He did not answer any of the old man's questions, nor respond to any of the greetings of the many friends gathered there. They could not understand what was the matter with him. An hour and a half passed in this way and still the Swami sat like a statue. The old man became angry and left swearing to himself. The Swami then burst into boyish laughter, in which all present also joined. A young man asked, "Swamiji, why were you so hard on that old man?" The Swami replied lovingly, "Dear sons, I am ready to sacrifice my life for you, for you are willing to follow my advice and have the power to do it! But here is an old man who has spent nine-tenths of his life in running after the pleasures of the senses; now he is incapacitated for both the spiritual and the worldly life and thinks he can have God's mercy for the mere asking! What is needed to attain Truth is Purushakâra, or personal exertion. How can God have mercy on one who is devoid of such exertion? He who is wanting in manliness is full of Tamas. It was because Arjuna, the bravest of warriors, was going to lose this manliness that Sri Krishna commanded him to do his Swadharma, so that by fulfilling his duties without attachment to results, he might acquire the qualities of Sattva, purification of heart, renunciation of all work, and self-surrender. Be strong! Be manly! I have respect even for a wicked person so long as he is manly and strong, for his strength will make him some day give up his wickedness and even renounce all work for selfish ends, and will thus eventually bring him to the Truth."

Following the Swami's instructions many young men of Alwar applied themselves to the study of Sanskrit. At times the Swami acted as teacher. He told them, "Study Sanskrit, but along with it study Western science as well. Learn accuracy, my boys! Study and labour, so that the time will come when you can put our history on a scientific basis. For now Indian history is disorganised. It has no chronological accuracy. The histories of our country written by English writers cannot but be weakening to our minds, for they tell only of our downfall. How can foreigners, who understand very little of our manners and customs or of our religion and philosophy, write faithful and unbiased histories of India? Naturally, many false notions and wrong inferences have found their way into them. Nevertheless Europeans have shown us how to proceed in making researches into our ancient history. Now it is for us to strike out an independent path of historical research for ourselves, to study the Vedas and the Purânas and the ancient annals of India, and from these make it our life's Sâdhanâ to write accurate, sympathetic and soul-inspiring histories of the land. *It is for Indians to write Indian History.* Therefore set yourselves to the task of rescuing our lost and hidden treasures from oblivion! Even as one whose child has been lost does not rest until one has found it, so do you never cease to labour until you have revived the glorious Past of India in the consciousness of the people. That will be the true national education, and with its advancement a true national spirit will be awakened!"

The Swami's personality endeared him to everyone. There was a Brâhmin boy who often came to him and who loved him as a disciple loves his master. He was of the age when he should have been invested with the sacred thread, but he lacked the means. When the Swami heard of this he could not rest. He spoke to the well-to-do among his devotees, "I have one thing to beg of you. Here is a Brâhmin boy who is too poor to meet the expenses for his Upanayana, or the sacred thread ceremony. As householders it is your duty to help him. Try to raise a subscription on his behalf. It is unbecoming for a Brâhmin boy of his age not to know the obligatory religious duties of his caste. Moreover, it will be very good of you if you can provide for his education also." The devotees hastened to raise the necessary funds. The Swami left shortly after this, but one can see in the first letter that he wrote to one of his friends at Alwar a month later that he did not forget the case, for he begins the letter by asking about the Upanayana ceremony of the boy.[1]

So the days grew into weeks, and when seven weeks had passed the Swami felt the Parivrâjaka call. He said to his friends, "I must be going! A Sannyâsin must always be on the move." And so he left, bidding farewell to his devoted disciples and Bhaktas, who could not bear the thought of parting from him. He was much affected at leaving them, but he, the Teacher, must always wander, teaching, preaching and helping mankind everywhere,—with the Spirit of the Lord within his heart. His friends insisted that he must travel by a covered bullock-cart as far as Pandupol at least, to avoid the heat and the loneliness. Several of his disciples begged to be allowed to accompany him for the first fifty or sixty miles; at first he objected, but was overcome finally by their pleadings.

At Pandupol there is a well-known temple, dedicated to Hanumânji. The Swami proceeded there at once and slept that night in the temple-compound. On the following morning he abandoned the bullock-cart, and he and his party went on foot some sixteen miles through a wild mountainous region, infested with wild beasts, to a village known by the name of Tahla. But the members of the party were so occupied with the stories, now amusing, now serious, with which the Swami entertained them and they felt so blessed in his presence that they had no thought of danger. In this village they spent the night in a temple dedicated to Nilkantha Mahâdeva.

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[1] *Complete Works* Vol. VI, letter addressed to G. S.—dated the 30th April, 1891.

The next morning, the Swami walked on some eighteen miles farther to the village Nârâyani where the Mother, in one of Her many forms, is worshipped. Here every year a great Melâ or fair is held, and from all parts of Rajputana people come to worship Her. Here the Swami parted from his friends and went on by himself to the next village called Bosoweh, some sixteen miles distant, where he took the train for the city of Jeypore, whither he had been pressed to come by a devotee who had met him at Alwar. This gentleman boarded the train at the Bandikui station and accompanied the Swami the rest of the trip to Jeypore. At Jeypore, the disciple insisted that the Swami should pose for a photograph. The Swami, much against his wishes, finally consented. This was the first time that a picture of the Swami as the wandering monk was taken.

The Swami remained at Jeypore for two weeks, during which time he met a famous Sanskrit grammarian and decided to study grammar with him. The teacher, though very learned, had not the faculty of imparting his knowledge. For three days he tried to explain to the Swami the commentary on the first Sutra or aphorism, but without success. On the fourth day, the Pandit said, "Swamiji, I am afraid you are not deriving much benefit from studying with me, for in three days I have not been able to make you grasp the meaning of the Sutra." The Swami resolved to master the commentary by himself. In three hours he accomplished what the Pandit could not do in three days. Shortly after, he went to the Pandit and in a casual way explained the commentary and its purport. The Pandit was amazed. After this the Swami proceeded to master Sutra after Sutra and chapter after chapter. Later he said in speaking of this experience, "If the mind is intensely eager, everything can be accomplished—mountains can be crumbled into atoms."

At Jeypore the Swami became very intimate with Sardar Hari Singh, the Commander-in-Chief of the State. He passed many days in his home discussing many interesting and instructive spiritual and scriptural subjects. One day the subject was the efficacy of image-worship. A strong believer in the doctrines of the Vedânta, Hari Singh did not believe in images and even after hours of discussion with the Swami he remained unconvinced. In the evening they went out for a walk. As they were passing along the footpath they came upon some devotees carrying the image of Sri Krishna and singing devotional songs as they went. The Swami and the Sardar watched the procession for a while as it passed. Suddenly the Swami touched Hari Singh and said, "Look there, see the living God!" The eyes of the Sardar fell on the image of Lord Krishna, and he stood there transfixed with tears of ecstasy trickling down his cheeks. When he returned to ordinary consciousness, he exclaimed, "Well, Swamiji, that was a revelation to me. What I could not understand after hours of discussion, was easily comprehended through your touch. Verily I saw the Lord in the image of Krishna!"

Another day, the Swami was seated with a number of followers giving them spiritual instructions, when a learned Sardar, Pandit Suraj Narain, honoured throughout the province for his erudition, came to see him. He caught the thread of the Swami's conversation and said, "Swamiji, I am a

Vedântist. I do not believe in the special divinity of Incarnations, the Avatâras of the Hindu mythology. We are all Brahman. What is the difference between me and an Avatâra?" The Swami replied, "Yes, that is quite true. The Hindus count fish, tortoise and boar as Incarnations. You say that you are also an Avatâra. But with which of these do you feel yourself as one?" There was a peal of laughter at this, and the Sardar was silenced.

Being restless and also desirous of moving on, the Swami next went to Ajmere, replete with the memories of the magnificence of its Hindu and Mogul rulers. In the summer months of 1891, he is found at Mount Abu, a celebrated hill resort of Central India and Rajputana renowned for the delicacy and beauty of the carvings of the Dilwârâ temple.

The Swami soon gathered around him a number of devoted followers with whom he used to walk in the evening. One day they were walking along the Bailey's walk, commanding the most beautiful scenery of the Hill Station. Below them stretched the lake of Mount Abu. The Swami with his friends left the walk and sat down amongst the stones. He began to sing and his song went on for hours. Some Europeans who were also taking an evening stroll were struck with the sweet music and waited for hours to get a glimpse of the singer. At last he came down and they congratulated him on his sweet voice and ecstatic song. At Mount Abu, destiny put the Maharaja of Khetri in his path. It happened in this wise. The Swami was living in a forlorn cave, where he practised austerities and meditation. His sole belongings were one or two blankets, a water-bowl and a few books. One day a Mussalman, a vakil of a native Prince, happened to pass by and saw the Swami. Struck with his princely appearance, he decided to talk to him. A few minutes' conversation impressed him with the wonderful learning and scholarship of the recluse. He became much attached to the Swami and visited him quite often. One day the vakil asked the Swami if he could be of any service to him. The Swami said, "Look here, Vakil Saheb, the rainy season is fast approaching. There are no doors to this cave. You can make for me a pair of doors, if you please." Much gratified, the vakil said, "This cave is a wretched one. If you will allow me, I will make a suggestion. I live alone in a nice Bungalow here. If you would condescend to come and live with me, I shall feel myself greatly blessed." When the Swami agreed to the proposal, the vakil said, "But I am a Mussalman. I shall, of course, make separate arrangements for your food." The Swami brushed this aside and moved to the Bungalow. Through the vakil and his brother officers of other States, the Swami made many friends in Mount Abu, including the vakil of the Maharao of Kotah and Thakur Fateh Singh, the Minister of that Prince. After a few days, the Mussalman vakil invited Munshi Jagmohanlâl, the Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Khetri, to see him. As it happened, the Swami was resting at the time, having on only a Kaupina and a piece of cloth. When the visitor saw the sleeping monk, he thought, "Oh ! here is one of those common Sâdhus, who are no better than thieves and rogues !" Presently the Swami awoke. Almost the first thing that was said to him by Jagmohanlal was, "Well, Swamiji, you are a Hindu monk. How is it that you are living with a Mussalman ! Your food might, now and then, be touched by him." At this question, the Swami flared up. He said, "Sir, what do you mean ? I am a Sannyâsin. I am above all your social conventions. I can dine even with a Bhangi. I am not afraid of

God, because He sanctions it. I am not afraid of the scriptures, because they allow it. But I am afraid of you people and your society. You know nothing of God and the scriptures. I see Brahman everywhere, manifested even through the meanest creature. For me there is nothing high or low. Siva, Siva!" A sort of divine fire shone about him. Jagmohanlal was silenced; but all the same, he wished that the Maharaja should make the acquaintance of such a Swami. He said, "Swamiji, do come with me to the palace to meet the Maharaja." The monk replied, "Very well, I will go day after to-morrow." Jagmohanlal on his return told his Prince all that had happened. The Maharaja became so desirous of meeting the Swami that he said, "I will go myself to see him." When the Swami heard this he went instantly to the palace, where His Highness warmly welcomed him. After the usual formalities he asked him, "Swamiji, what is life?" The monk replied, "Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down." The Swami's own life of hardship and renunciation caused a world of feeling to appear in his words. Impressed, the Maharaja next asked, "Well, Swamiji, what then is education?" The response was, "I should say, education is the nervous association of certain ideas." And he went on to explain this statement, saying that not until ideas had been made instincts could they be reckoned as real and vital possessions of consciousness. Then he told of the life of Sri Ramakrishna to the Maharaja, who sat listening to him eagerly and attentively, his soul wrapt in a flame of burning passion for Truth, as he heard the words of spiritual nectar fall from the Swami's lips.

For days the Maharaja listened to the monk's words of wisdom; then he invited him to go with him to Khetri. The Swami reflected for a moment and agreed. Several days after the Prince and his retinue left Mount Abu and journeyed by train to Jeypore, the Swami joining him as promised. The distance of ninety miles from Jeypore to Khetri was travelled in a state carriage. A few days after reaching Khetri the Swami initiated him. And what a wonderful disciple he became! Memories still live of him kneeling in reverence before the Swami, and the monk in his turn, knowing the depth and the sincerity of the man, loved him dearly and expected much of him in the way of advancing the well-being of the country. Later, in America, he kept him advised of his progress and made him one of the privileged ones by writing him marvellous letters.

The Swami passed many weeks with the Maharaja, studying, teaching and living the spiritual life. Though in a palace, he lived as a monk, in constant communion with his soul and his Master. At the palace he became acquainted with Pandit Nârayandâs, who was the foremost Sanskrit grammarian of his time in Rajputana. Believing this to be a great opportunity, the Swami decided to resume his study of the Mahâbhâshya, Patanjali's great commentary on the Sutras of Pânini, which he had begun at Jeypore. The Pandit was pleased to have him as a pupil. After the first day he remarked, "Swamiji, it is not often one meets a student like you!" One day the Pandit questioned the Swami on a very long lesson given the day before. To his surprise the monk quoted the whole of it verbatim, adding his own comments thereto. After a time the Pandit seeing that his pupil was often forced to answer his own questions said, "Swamiji, there is nothing more to teach you. I have taught you all that I know, and you have absorbed it." And so the Swami, saluting the Pandit respectfully, thanked him for the kindness he had shown him and became in many respects the teacher of the teacher.

On one occasion the Maharaja asked the Swami, "Swamiji, what is law?" Without a moment's hesitation he exclaimed, "Law is altogether internal. It does not exist outside; it is a phenomenon of intelligence and experience. It is the mind which classifies sense observations and moulds them into laws. The order of experience is always internal. Apart from the impression received through the sense organs and the reaction of intelligence upon these, in an orderly and consecutive manner, there is no law. The scientists say that it is all homogeneous substance and homogeneous vibration. Experience and its classification are internal phenomena. Thus law itself is intelligent and is born in absolute intelligence." Following upon this statement the Swami spoke of the Sânkhya philosophy and showed how modern science corroborated its conclusions. He then influenced the Maharaja to take an active interest in scientific study, urging upon him the country's need for scientific training and researches. With this purpose he ordered some science primers for the Maharaja and, later on, some scientific instruments of a simple order, and himself began to teach his royal pupil.

No words can paint the devotion of the Maharaja to his Guru. So great was his reverence for him that he would serve him, rubbing his feet gently, whilst the Swami lay asleep; but the Swami did not allow him to do this before others, saying that it would lower the dignity of the Maharaja in the eyes of his subjects.

One day the Maharaja expressed sorrow to the Swami for not having been blessed with a son and heir, and feeling that the Swami could grant him any favour, said, "Swamiji, bless me that a son may be born unto me. If you will only do so, there is no doubt that my prayer will be granted." Seeing his anxiety, the Swami blessed the Prince.

But let it not be thought that the Swami spent the whole of his time in the palace. He was often at the houses of his poorer devotees, and frequently ate at the house of Pandit Sankar Lâl, a poor Brâhmin. The whole town of Khetri was enamoured of the Swami, and he treated the least of his admirers with the same love and affection as he showed to the Maharaja.

He thus spent some time at Khetri, beloved of the Prince and his subjects, instructing them in various ways and showering his blessings on them. But soon again the Swami felt that he must go into the wide world, unattached. And so next we find him on his way to Ahmedabad.

XVI

IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

In Ahmedabad, of historic memories, after wandering about several days and living on alms, the Swami was finally received as a guest at the house of Mr. Lal Sankar Umia Sankar, one of the Sub-Judges of the Ahmedabad District. During his stay there he visited the many places of historic interest both in the city proper and its environs. In olden times Ahmedabad was the capital of the Sultans of Gujarat, and one of the handsomest cities in Hindusthan. The Swami enjoyed particularly the beautiful Jain temples, as well as the evidence of Mohammedan culture, as shown by the glorious mosques and tombs. Here he was able to add to his knowledge of Jainism, for there were many Jain scholars living there. After a few days, he journeyed on to Wadhwan.

From Wadhwan the Swami proceeded next to Limbdi. This is the chief town of the cotton-producing State of that name. In this State, he begged his way from door to door, sleeping wherever he could find shelter, and living as chance dictated. On arriving in the city he made enquiries and learned that there was a place where Sâdhus lived. It was somewhat isolated, but the Sâdhus welcomed him warmly and urged him to stay with them as long as he wished. Tired and worn out and starved after his long marches, he accepted the invitation. He had not the slightest idea of the character of the place. What was his horror to find, after he had been in the house for a few days, that the inmates belonged to a degenerate sect of sex-worshippers.

He could hear the prayers and incantations of women as well as of men in the adjoining room. His first thought was to leave the place at once; but to his bewilderment he found that he was locked in and a guard had been set to prevent his escape. The high-priest of the sect summoned him and said, "You are a Sâdhu with a magnetic personality; evidently you have practised Brahmacharya for years. Now you must give us the fruit of your long austerity. We shall break your Brahmacharya in order to perform a special Sâdhanâ and thereby we shall be enabled to acquire certain psychic powers." In spite of his terror the Swami kept his presence of mind, betraying no anxiety and seemingly taking the matter as a jest. Amongst the Swami's devotees was a boy who used to come frequently to see him. To him the Swami entrusted a note to the Thakore Saheb in which he explained his predicament and asked for help. The boy hurried to the palace and managed to deliver the note to the Thakore Saheb himself. The Prince immediately sent some of his guards to the Swami's rescue, and thereafter at the Prince's solicitation the Swami took up his residence in the palace. While in Limbdi, the Swami held many discussions in Sanskrit with the local Pandits. His Holiness the late Sankarâchârya of Govardhan Math, Puri, bore witness to this, and was astonished at his learning and at his wonderful toleration. After a short stay in Limbdi, he left for Junagad with many recommendations to the friends of the Prince there and elsewhere. The Prince entreated him to be very cautious in his solitary wanderings. The Swami himself after his terrible experience decided to use great circumspection in choosing his lodgings and to exercise discrimination with regard to persons with whom he might come in contact.

With the recommendations from the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi, the Swami visited Bhavnagar and Sihore on his way to Junagad. Arriving at Junagad he became the guest of the Dewan of that State, Babu Haridâs Vihâridâs, who was so charmed with his company that every evening he, with all the State officials, used to meet the Swami and converse with him till late at night.

In his talks at Junagad the Swami spoke of Jesus Christ and then in a spirit of patriotism revealed to his devotees the whole character of the great influence which Hinduism had exercised on the Western religious imagination and showed how Central and Western Asia was the scene of the international exchange of ideas. He showed them the historic values of their own culture and the invaluable worth of the Hindu experience in the propagation of spiritual ideals throughout the world. He also told them the life-history of the Man of Dakshineswar, illustrating it with innumerable sayings of the Master. It was thus that the people of the distant province came to know of Sri Ramakrishna and appreciate his teachings.

Interested as he always was in ancient monuments and ruins, the Swami found ample scope for study here. Because of Mount Girnar, a few miles from the city, Junagad is not only a place of historic interest, but a place of pilgrimage as well. For here are many temples sacred to Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. There are also many beautiful mosques and tombs. Of Hindu ruins, the caves called the Khapra Khodia, used at various times as a monastery by different orders of monks, were probably the most interesting. The Swami visited them all, but was chiefly interested in Mount Girnar, which is sacred to all creeds of India. Consumed with a yearning to perform Sâdhanâs, he sought out a solitary cave in which to practise meditation. At the end of some days he returned to his friends with renewed mental energy. Soon after he felt that he must move on. And so taking leave of his friends at Junagad, he went to Bhooj with letters of introduction to high officials there from the Dewan of Junagad.

It might seem inconsistent to some that a man of stern renunciation like the Swami spent so much of his time in the palaces of the Princes of India and with their Dewans. Many even severely criticised him for doing so; others asked him why he did so. The Swami replied that his intention was to influence the Maharajas and turn their attention to the religious life, thereby insuring the performance of their Swadharma, that is, government for the good of the people whose custodians they were. Upon these Princes depended not only the welfare and contentment, but the advancement as well of the governed. They alone could inaugurate liberal reforms, improved methods of education, and charitable and philanthropic institutions in their territories. "If I can win over to my cause those in whose power are wealth and the administration of the affairs of hundreds of thousands, my mission will be accomplished all the sooner; by influencing one Maharaja alone I can indirectly benefit thousands of people." With this intention he would occasionally give up the purely Parivrâjaka life to reside in some palace. One day he would be seen walking in the gardens of some Prince, or driving with him in his carriage; perhaps the next day would find him alone and afoot on the dusty roads, on his way to some poor devotee's house.

At Bhooj, he stayed with the Dewan. The latter spoke to a disciple who visited him several years later of the Swami's prodigious intellect, most gracious personality, and wonderful power of presenting the most abstruse thoughts in such a simple way, that all who met him were fascinated. With the Dewan he held long discussions, as he had done with the Prime Minister of Junagad, about the industrial, agricultural and economic problems of the land and the need for the spread of education among the masses. The Swami was introduced to the Maharaja of Cutch by the Dewan, and had long talks with him, which made a great impression upon the Prince.

As usual, the Swami paid visits to the various sacred places of pilgrimage in the vicinity, mingling with the pilgrims and Sannyâsins, and gaining much knowledge and experience. From Bhooj he returned to Junagad, rested there for a few days, and then he was off again to Verawal and Patan Somnâth, popularly known as Prabhâs. Verawal's title to fame is its antiquity; Patan Somnath's lies in its great ruined temple. Three times it was destroyed, and three times rebuilt. It is said that in olden times ten thousand villages were held by the temple as its endowment and that three hundred musicians were attached to it. The Swami paused at this great ruin and pondered over the greatness which was India's in the past. The very dust for miles about is sacred to the spiritual Hindu, for, as the story goes, it was here that the Yâdavas—the clan to which Sri Krishna belonged—slew one another and their extensive kingdom was brought to ruin by Sri Krishna's divine will. After this he himself, knowing that his time was come, left his body as he sat in Yoga under the spreading branch of an ancient tree; it was the arrow of an aboriginal, who mistook him for a deer, that killed him.

The Swami visited the Somnath temple, the Suraj Mandir and the new temple of Somnath built by Rani Ahalyâbâi of Indore, and took his bath at the confluence of the three rivers. At Prabhas he again met the Maharaja of Cutch and had many long conversations with him. The Prince was deeply impressed by his magnetic personality and was astonished at his vast knowledge. He used to say, "Swamiji, as after reading many books the head becomes dazed, even so after hearing your discourses my brain gets dizzy. How will you utilise all this talent? You will never rest until you have done wonderful things!"

After a short time he returned to Junagad, which seems to have become the centre from which he made a number of side trips through Kathiawar and to Cutch. Leaving Junagad a third time he now came to Porbandar with a letter of introduction to the Prime Minister. Porbandar is held to be the site of the ancient city of Sudâmâpuri, known to the readers of the Bhâgavata. In this place the Swami visited the ancient temple of Sudama. He was cordially welcomed by the Dewan, Pandit Sankar Pândurang, who was the Administrator of the State during the minority of the Prince. The Dewan was a great Vedic scholar and was at that time translating the Vedas. Struck with the Swami's scholarship, he often asked his help to explain some of the more abstruse passages of the Vedas, which the Swami did with his usual lucidity. At the request of the Dewan he stayed at Porbandar for eleven months to help him with his book. Both worked constantly, the Swami becoming more and more interested as he perceived the greatness of the thought contained therein. He finished the reading of the Mahâbhâshya, the great commentary of Patanjali on

Panini's grammar, and took up the study of French, at the instance of the Pandit who said, "It will be of use to you, Swamiji!"

As he came to understand the Swami better and to appreciate his intellectual power and the breadth and originality of his ideas, Pandit Sankar Pandurang said, "Swamiji, I am afraid you cannot do much in this country. Few will appreciate you here. You ought to go to the West where people will understand you and your worth. Surely you can throw a great light upon Western culture by preaching the Sanâtana Dharma!" The Swami was glad to hear these words, for they coincided with his own secret thoughts, which were as yet vague, although he had already expressed them to Mr. C. H. Pandya at Junagad.

During this period the Swami was exceedingly restless. He was beginning to understand to some extent the truth of the Master's words that he had power enough in him to revolutionise the world! Wherever he travelled and at all the courts he visited, the Pandits and the Princes found in him the same terrible restlessness to do some work for his country, some time, somewhere! The idea uppermost in his mind was the spiritual redemption of India. He saw the limitations of orthodoxy as well as the dread blunders of reform. Everywhere he found petty jealousies, animosity, and lack of unity. He saw India, potentially supreme, glorious beyond words and rich with Hindu and Aryan culture, being degraded by the stupid activities of the so-called "leaders"—demagogues preaching reforms which they were unable to incorporate into their own lives, and blinded by the glare of an extraneous culture and its ephemeral power, trying to throw overboard without reflection the whole cargo of the race's experience. He confided to those who loved and admired him that the time had come for a new order of things. To the Ruling Chiefs and their Prime Ministers he announced this message. And they, recognising that he was a genius and a man of realisation gifted with an irresistible personality, listened to his words. He felt that to raise India in the estimation of the civilised world he must first preach the glories of the Sanâtana Dharma to the West. The more he studied the Vedas and pondered over the philosophies which the Aryan Rishis had thought out, the surer he was that India was in very truth the Mother of Religions, the cradle of civilisation and the fountain-head of spirituality.

When the Swami was at Porbandar a curious thing happened. Swami Trigunatita had been for some time making the round of pilgrimages afoot and had just then come from Gujarat to Porbandar, and was staying with some other wandering Sannyâsins. The monks desired to make the pilgrimage to Hinglâj, but it was an arduous journey of many miles, and they were weary and footsore; so they thought of travelling to Karachi by steamer and thence to Hinglaj by camel. But they had no money. They were at a loss as to what to do, when one of the group said, "There is a learned Paramahamsa stopping with the Dewan of Porbandar. He speaks English fluently and is accounted a great scholar. Let Swami Trigunatita go and interview him. Perhaps the Mahâtmâ will intercede with the Dewan for us so that our expenses may be paid." Trigunatita set out at the head of the little company for the palace. It so happened that at that hour the Swami was pacing the parapeted roof of the palace and saw the group of Sâdhus at a distance on their way to the palace. Seeing Trigunatita in the group he was surprised, but assuming an air of indifference, he went to his room on the ground floor to receive his brother disciple. Trigunatita was exceedingly glad to meet the beloved Leader so unexpectedly. But the Swami sternly rebuked him for following him about. Trigunatita protested that he had not the slightest idea that he was in Porbandar, that he and his friends had come to the palace solely to beg the passage money to Hinglaj. The Swami was able to arrange this and dismissed Trigunatita with a warning never to seek him again. The Swami broke from his associates at Porbandar, and next went as a wandering monk to Dwârakâ, holy with innumerable memories and legends of Sri Krishna. But of its glories nothing remains at the present day. Now the ocean roars in tumult over the place where once stood a great capital of which Sri Krishna was the reigning prince. Gazing out upon the ocean, waves of agony rose in the Swami's mind at the thought that nothing remained but ruins of that Greater India. He sat on the shore and yearned ardently to fathom the contents of the future years. Then rising as from a dream, he betook himself to the monastery founded by Sri Sankarâchârya, known as the Sârada Math, where he was received by the Mahanta, and was assigned a room. There in the silence of his cell in the ruined city of the Yadavas he saw a great light, as it were—the bright Future of India.

He next journeyed on to Mândvi, where he met Akhandananda, who had been following him from Delhi. The two brother disciples remained together for about a fortnight, when at the earnest desire of the Swami to be left alone, Akhandananda continued his pilgrimages. The Swami left for Nârâyan-Sarovar and Ashâpuri, returning eventually to Mandvi, where he had made many friends. At the request of the

Maharaja he visited Bhooj again. His next stopping place was Palitana, where the holy mountain, Satrunjaya, sacred to the Jains is situated. High up on the mountain is a Hindu temple dedicated to Hanumân, and a Moslem shrine dedicated to Hengar, a Mohammedan saint. The view from the summit of the mountain is magnificent. The Swami ascended this mountain to enjoy the great panorama.

His next stage was the dominions of the Gaekwar of Baroda. He stayed at the capital for a short time, as the guest of Dewan Bahadur Manibhai J., the late minister of Baroda, a man of innate piety and nobility of character. From there he passed into Khandwa in Central India. In the course of his wanderings in the town he came across the residence of one Babu Haridâs Chatterjee, a pleader. This gentleman found the Swami standing at his door when he returned from the Court. At first he took him to be an ordinary Sâdhu, but was soon made aware during his conversation with the monk that he was the most learned man he had ever met. Naturally, he invited him to stay at his house, and treated him as a member of the family. He remained here for about three weeks, paying a flying visit up-country to Indore. The Bengali settlement and many persons of the city met the Swami, and all were impressed with his knowledge of the scriptures and English literature. Says the Swami's host: "There was not the least trace of affectation in his conversation. His elevated thought and noble sentiments flowed in the choicest language in an easy and natural way. He had an earnestness about him which made him look as one inspired."

The host asked the Swami to give a public lecture. The Swami was half-inclined to do so, but said that as he had never lectured before in public he had no experience of how to modulate his voice on the platform. Nevertheless, he did not mind trying if it were possible to get a sympathetic audience, with the Deputy Commissioner to preside. But as the conditions proposed were not practicable in a backward place like Khandwa, the idea had to be abandoned.

During his stay there, Babu Mâdhav Chandra Banerjee, the Civil Judge, gave a dinner to the Bengali residents in honour of the Swami. The Swami took with him some of the Upanishads, with the intention of expounding them before and after the dinner. When the guests arrived, he read some of the very intricate and abstruse passages, explaining them in such a way that a child could understand. Among the guests was Babu Pyârilâl Ganguly, a pleader and a Sanskrit scholar, who was inclined to play the rôle of a critic. But when he heard the illuminating replies and comments of the Swami, he was completely disarmed and after the reading said to Haridas Babu that the Swami's very appearance denoted greatness. When this remark was communicated to the Swami by Haridas Babu, a remarkable glow illumined his countenance, and he said, "Well, I myself do not know; but my Guru used to say the same thing about me, only in more glowing terms."

Here at Khandwa one gets the first glimpse of his serious intention to be present at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Somewhere, it might have been at Junagad or at Porbandar, he had heard of the great religious convention that was to be held some time in the following year. He said to Haridas Babu, "If someone can help me with the passage money, all will be well, and I shall go."

Before he left Khandwa, Haridas Babu's brother gave him a letter of introduction to Seth Râmdâs Chhabildas, a noted Barrister of Bombay. Leaving many friends and admirers in Khandwa and promising to return some time, he left for Bombay and arrived there about the last week of July, 1892. He was met by Mr. Chhabildas and it was at his house that he lived during his stay. One day the Swami went to see a noted politician of Bombay, who showed him a Calcutta newspaper containing an account of the controversy about the Age of Consent Bill. The Swami hung his head in shame when he read that the bill was opposed by the educated section of the Bengali community, and bitterly criticised the iniquitous practice of early marriage.

The Swami remained in Bombay for several weeks, after which he moved on to Poona. Here he was the guest for several days of Bâl Gangâdhar Tilak, the renowned scholar and patriot, with whom the Swami had many interesting conversations on various topics. Hearing that the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi was then at Mahâbaleswar, he went there to see the Prince. The Thakore Saheb, who had been initiated by him, pleaded with him saying, "Swamiji, do come with me to Limbdi and remain there for good!" But the Swami declined the invitation saying, "Not now, Your Highness! For I have a work to do! I cannot rest now. But if ever I live the life of retirement it shall be with you!" He could not however carry out this intention, for he entered Mahâsamâdhi in the midst of his work.

The Swami next visited the Maharaja of Kolhapur, to whom he had a note from the Maharaja of Bhavnagar. The Rani of Kolhapur became much devoted to the Swami and was fortunate enough to have the Swami accept a new Geruâ cloth. The Khangi Karbhari, a high state official of Kolhapur, gave the Swami a letter of introduction to a Mahratta gentleman of Belgaum. One morning at about 6

O'clock, in 1892, the Swami went to Belgaum. We give below some reminiscences (slightly abridged) of the Swami by Prof. G. S. Bhate, M. A., the son of this Mahratta host at Belgaum.

" . . . The Swami was rather striking in appearance and appeared to be even at first sight somewhat out of the common run of men. But neither my father nor any one else in the family or even in our small town was prepared to find in our guest the remarkable man that he turned out to be.

" From the very first day of the Swami's stay, occurred little incidents which led us to revise our ideas about him. In the first place, though he wore clothes of the familiar Sannyâsi's colour, he appeared to be dressed somewhat different from his brother Sannyâsis. He used to wear a banyan. Instead of the Danda he carried a long stick, resembling a walking stick. His kit consisted of the usual gourd, a pocket copy of the Gita and one or two books. . . . We were not accustomed to a Sannyâsi using the English language as a medium of conversation, wearing a banyan instead of sitting bare-bodied, and showing a versatility of intellect and variety of information which would have done credit to an accomplished man of the world. . . . The first day after the meal the Swami asked for betel-nut and Pân. Then either the same day or the day after, he wanted some chewing tobacco. One can imagine the horror which such demands from a Sannyâsi, who is supposed to have gone beyond these small creature comforts, would inspire. From his own admissions we learned that he was not a Brâhmin and yet he was a Sannyâsi; that he was a Sannyâsi and yet craved for things which only householders are supposed to want. This was really very upsetting to our preconceived notions and yet he succeeded in making us accept the situation and to see that there was really nothing wrong in a Sannyâsi wanting Pân and Supari or chewing tobacco. The explanation he gave of his craving disarmed us completely. He said that he had been a gay young man, a graduate of the Calcutta University, and that his life before he met Râmakrishna Paramahamsa had been very worldly. As a result of the teaching of his Guru he had changed his outlook on life, but some things he found it impossible to get rid of, and he let them remain as being of no great consequence. When he was asked whether he was a vegetarian or meat-eater, he said that as he belonged not to the ordinary order of Sannyâsis but to the order of the Paramahamsas, he had no option in the matter. The Paramahamsa, by the rules of that order, was bound to eat whatever was offered; when there was no offering he had to go without food. Further a Paramahamsa was not precluded from accepting food from any human being irrespective of his religious beliefs. When asked whether he would accept food from non-Hindus, he told us that he had often taken food from Mahomedans.

"The Swami appeared to be very well grounded in the old Pandit method of studying Sanskrit. At the time of his arrival, I was learning the Ashtâdhyâyi (of Panini) by rote, and to my great surprise, his memory, even in quoting from the portions of the Ashtâdhyâyi which I had been painfully trying to remember, was much superior to mine. If I remember aright, when my father wanted me to repeat the portions that I had been preparing, I made some slips, which to my confusion the Swami, smiling, corrected. The effect of this was almost overwhelming as far as my feelings towards him were concerned. . . .

"For a day or two after his arrival my father was busy in trying to take the measure of his guest. Soon he came to the conclusion that the guest was not only above the ordinary but was an extraordinary personality. He gathered a few of his personal friends together, to see what their opinion would be. They agreed that it was worth while to gather together the local leaders and learned men to meet and argue with the Swami. What struck us most in the crowded gatherings which began to be held every day after the presence of the Swami became known in Belgaum, was the unfailing good humour which the Swami preserved even in heated arguments. He was quick enough at retort, but there was never any sting in it. One day we had a rather amusing illustration of the Swami's coolness in debate. There was at that time in Belgaum an Executive Engineer who was the best informed man in our town. He was one of the not uncommon type of Hindu whose external life was most orthodox but who was at heart a sceptic with a strong leaning towards science. He felt that religion or belief in religion was a custom which had gained sanction only through practice through the ages. With these views he found the Swami rather a formidable opponent, armed with larger experience, more philosophy and more science, than he could muster. Naturally, he lost his temper in argument and was discourteous, if not positively rude, to the Swami. My father protested, but the Swami smilingly intervened, saying that he did not mind. . . . Though the Swami soon got the best of the argument with all, his aim was not so much to be victorious as to create the feeling that the time had come to demonstrate to the country and to the whole world that the Hindu religion was not dying and to preach to the world the priceless truth contained in the Vedânta. . . . He complained that the Vedânta had been treated as the possession of a sect rather than the perennial source of universal inspiration that it really was."

From the diary of the Sub-divisional Forest Officer, Babu Haripada Mitra, with whom the Swami stayed for nine days, we get the following interesting impressions of the Swami:

"It is the late evening of Tuesday, the 18th of October, 1892. A stout young Sannyâsin of cheerful countenance came to see me with a friend of mine, a lawyer. Looking at him, I saw a calm figure, with eyes flashing like lightning, clean-shaven, garbed in a Geruâ Alkhalla, and with a Geruâ turban on the head, and Mahratta sandals on the feet. He was most prepossessing. I was at once attracted to him. At that time I believed every Sannyâsin to be a cheat, and was a sceptic in matters of religion and God. My first thought was that this man must have come to beg something or to ask me to take him into my house because it did not suit him to live with a Mahratta. When I entered into conversation with him I was surprised to find that he was a thousand times superior to me in every respect, and that he asked for nothing! I begged him to come to live with me, but he said, 'I am quite happy with the Mahratta; if I should leave after seeing a Bengali, he might be hurt. Besides, the whole family treats me with great love. But I will think about it and let you know later on.' However, he promised to take breakfast with me the next morning."

The next morning Haripada Babu waited for a long time; when the Swami did not come, he went to the Mahratta's house to escort the Swami to his home. He was surprised to find there a large crowd of many leading Vakils, educated men, Pandits and prominent citizens asking the Swami questions. Saluting him he took his seat among them and was amazed at the ready replies which the Swami gave in English, Hindi, Bengali, and Sanskrit without pausing.

When the visitors left, the Swami said to Haripada Babu, "I hope you will excuse me for not keeping the appointment. You see, I could not go without hurting many people's feelings." On his again pressing the Swami to come and live in his house, the Swami said, "I shall go if you can make my host agree to your proposal." After much persuasion the Mahratta friend agreed to it. The Swami's belongings at this time consisted of a Kamandalu, a book wrapped in Geruâ cloth and a book on French music which he was studying.

Three days in Haripada Babu's house passed in constant talk and discussion on religious matters with many educated gentlemen of the town. During this short time many of the doubts which had obsessed the mind of his host for years were dispelled. On the fourth day the Swami said that it was high time for him to be on the move again, for, "Sannyâsins," he remarked, "should not stay more than three days in a city, and one day in a village. If one stays for long in one place, attachment grows. We Sannyâsins should keep at a distance all the things that bind one to Mâyâ." But the host protested, and the Swami consented to stay a few days more.

One day, the Swami related to his host many incidents of his wanderer's life after he had taken the vow not to touch money. As the tale unfolded Haripada Babu thought, "What pain and trouble and hardship have been his!" But the Swami regarded them lightly as of no importance. He related how in one place he was very hungry and was given a food so hot with chillis that the burning sensation in the mouth and stomach did not subside for a long time. Again, he was driven away with the remark that there was no place for Sâdhus and thieves! He also related how he was for a time under the sharp eye of detectives who watched his doings and movements. These were to him huge jokes, "the play of the Mother!"

His host found the Swami well-read not only in religious and philosophical books, but in secular ones as well. To his surprise he heard him quote at considerable length from the *Pickwick Papers.* Thinking it very strange that a Sâdhu should be so familiar with secular literature, he asked the Swami how often he had read it, and was astonished to learn that he had read it only twice. In answer to the question as to how he could have memorised it in only two readings, the Swami answered that when he read anything he concentrated his entire attention upon it. "The power of mind arises from control of the forces of the body. The idea is to conserve and transform the physical into mental and spiritual energies. The great danger lies in spending the forces of the body in wanton and reckless pleasures, and thus losing the retentive faculties of the mind." "Whatever you do, devote your whole mind, heart and soul to it. I once met a great Sannyâsin, who cleansed his brass cooking utensils, making them shine like gold, with as much care and attention as he bestowed on his worship and meditation."

"Swamiji was", says his host, "a real teacher. Sitting before him was not like doing so before an austere schoolmaster. He was often merry in conversation, full of gaiety, fun and laughter even while imparting the highest instruction. The next moment he would solve abstruse questions with such seriousness and gravity that he filled every one with awe. Persons of various natures came to see him, some on account of his great intellect, some to test his learning, some from personal motives, others for instruction, still others because he himself was so interesting, others, again, because they desired to spend the time free from the troubles and vexations of worldly life. Everyone had free access to him and was cordially received. It was wonderful to see the Swamiji grasp the intentions and fathom the characters of those who came. No one could conceal anything from his penetrating eye. He seemed to read their inmost thoughts! There was a young man who often came to him thinking of becoming a Sâdhu, so that he might escape the troubles of preparing himself for the ensuing University examination. But Swamiji on seeing the boy at once understood him and said with a smile, ' Come to me to become a Sâdhu after you have secured the M. A. degree, for it is easier to do so than to lead the life of the Sannyâsin.' It was simply wonderful how Swamiji charmed our hearts. I shall never forget the lessons which he imparted while sitting under a sandal tree in the courtyard of my house."

At this time Haripada Babu was given to dosing himself with various medicines. The Swami advised him against it, saying that most diseases were purely of a nervous character and could be eradicated by vigorous and radically different states of mind. "And what is the use of thinking of disease always?" added the Swami. "Keep cheerful; live a righteous life; think elevating thoughts; be merry, but never indulge in pleasures which tax the body or which cause you to repent; then all will be well. And as regards death, what does it matter if people like you and me die? That will not make the earth deviate from its axis! We should never consider ourselves so important as to think that the world cannot go on without us!" From that day Haripada Babu gave up the habit.

Haripada Babu used to get irritated when reprimanded at the office by his superiors (who were English), though he had a coveted position and was drawing a handsome salary. When the Swami heard this he said, "You have yourself taken this service for the sake of money and are duly paid for it. Why should you trouble your mind about such small things and add to your miseries by thinking continually, 'Oh, in what bondage am I placed!' No one is keeping you in bondage. You are quite at liberty to resign if you choose. Why should you constantly carp at your superiors? If you feel your present position helpless, do not blame them, blame yourself! Do you think they care a straw whether you resign or not? There are hundreds of others to take your place. Your business is to concern yourself solely with your duties and responsibilities. Be good yourself and the whole world will appear good to you and you will see only the good in others. We see in the external world the same image which we carry in our hearts. Give up the habit of fault-finding and you will be surprised to find how gradually those against whom you have a grudge will change their entire attitude towards you. All our mental states are reflected in the conduct of others towards us." These words of the Swami made an indelible impression on the listener, and he turned over a new leaf.

Haripada Babu had been studying the Bhagavad-Gitâ by himself, but was unable to grasp its teachings and gave it up, thinking that there was no practical value in it. But on the Swami's reading and explaining some portions of it to him he realised what a wonderful book the Gita was. He grasped its spirit and relationship to daily life. But it was not alone the Gita that he came to appreciate under the Swami's kind instruction, but also the works of Thomas Carlyle and the novels of Jules Verne.

" I had never found in anybody such intense patriotism as was his. One evening, reading in a newspaper that a man had died in Calcutta from starvation, the Swami was overcome with sorrow. On asking the cause of his grief he told me what he had read, and said, 'It is not surprising that in Western countries, in spite of their organised charitable institutions and charity-funds, many people die every year from the same cause—the neglect of society. But in our country, where righteousness has always been upheld, every beggar receives something, if only a handful of rice; and so we do not often have people dying of starvation, except when there is a famine. This is the first time I ever heard of anyone dying of starvation.' 'But, Swamiji,' I rejoined, 'is it not a waste of money to give alms to beggars? My English education leads me to believe that instead of really benefiting them it only degrades their nature, for with the pice given to them they get the means to indulge in such bad habits as smoking Gânjâ (hemp) and so on. Instead, it is far better to contribute something towards organised charity.' Then the Swami said with great intensity, 'Why should you worry your head about what a beggar does with a pice or two you give him? Is it not better for persons like you who can afford it, to give him something than to drive him to steal? Suppose he spends the trifle on hemp, that affects only him; but when he resorts to stealing or something worse it affects the whole of society.' "

In his talks with Haripada Mitra he anticipated many of the mature views on life which he expressed publicly later on. Even at that time one finds him advocating reform with regard to early marriage, advising all, especially young men, to take a bold stand against this custom, which was enervating Hindu society. Writes Haripada Babu in his diary:

" Speaking of the Sannyâsa Ashrama he remarked that it was best for a man to practise the control of his mind during his life as a student or as a householder before taking to the life of a wandering monk, 'Otherwise,' he said, 'when the first glow of enthusiasm fades out, the man is likely to consort with those hemp-smoking, idle vagabonds who in the guise of Sâdhus parade the country.' . . . I said to him, 'Swamiji, if according to your advice I give up anger and pride and look upon all with an equal eye, then my servants and subordinates will be rude and disobedient to me and even my relatives will not let me live in peace!' He replied, 'Be like the snake of Sri Ramakrishna's parable! At first the terror of the village, the snake met with a Sâdhu who spoke to him of his evil ways. The snake repented and the Sâdhu gave him a certain Mantra to meditate upon and advised him to practise non-resistance. The snake retired to a solitary nook and did as he was told. It so happened that the Sannyâsin in his wanderings passed by this same village some time later. What was his surprise when he saw the snake half-dead, as the result of violent beatings and maltreatment. He asked the snake how he had come to such a pass, to be met with the reply that by following the religious life he had become harmless, and that those who had formerly feared him now pelted him with stones and beat him mercilessly. Then the Guru said, 'My child, I asked you not to harm anyone, but I did not forbid you to hiss.' So the snake did as he was bidden, and ever afterwards though he injured none, none dared injure him.' And applying this parable the Swami told me that, though it is necessary to appear worldly before worldly people, one's heart should always be given over to the Lord and the mind kept under firm control.

"The Swami used to say, 'Religion results from direct perception! Put in a homely way, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Try to realise religion, otherwise you will gain nothing.' Quoting the Lord Buddha he said, 'Argument is as a desert and as a wilderness wherein one loses his way and comes to grief. Realisation is everything'. It was not his habit to answer the same question in the same manner, citing the same illustration. Whenever the same question arose he made of it a new subject as it were. One never felt bored at hearing him, but always wished to hear more and more."

All those who heard the Swami speak at Belgaum were struck with his knowledge of the physical sciences. It was that knowledge which he used to furnish his discourses with scientific parallels. He also showed to them that the aim of religion and the purpose of science were one and the same—Truth—which is always one. From religion he would go on to the discussion of sociological questions, telling with sorrow in his voice of the sad condition of the villagers who, not knowing sanitary laws and the principles of hygiene, used the same ponds for drinking, bathing and cleansing purposes. "What brains can you expect of such people?" the Swami would exclaim in despair.

During the discussions in Belgaum he often became impatient with those who were fanatical and did not care to follow the drift of his thought. Sometimes they were obstreperous, and then he would blaze away at them. He was like a thunderbolt. He spoke the truth. He spoke boldly. He did not mince matters. Speaking of those who hold to their own views fanatically and ignorantly, the Swami told the following story: "There was once a king who hearing that the prince of a neighbouring territory was advancing upon his capital to lay siege to it, held a council, calling all the people for advice as to how to defend the country from the enemy. The engineers advised the building of a high earthen mound with a huge trench all around the capital; the carpenters proposed the construction of a wooden wall; the shoe-makers suggested that the same wall be built of leather, for 'there is nothing like leather,' they said. But the blacksmiths shouted out that they were all wrong, and that the wall should be built of iron. And then came in the lawyers with the argument that the best way to defend the State was to tell the enemy in a legal way that they were in the wrong and out of court in attempting to confiscate another's property. Finally came the priests, who laughed them all to scorn, saying, 'You are all talking like lunatics! First of all the gods must be propitiated with sacrifices, and then only can we be invincible.' Instead of defending their kingdom they argued and fought among themselves. Meanwhile the enemy advanced, stormed and sacked the city. Even so are men."

One day, when he and his host were alone, the

Swami told of his intention to sail for America to attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. His host was delighted, and carried away with enthusiasm, proposed then and there to raise a subscription in the city for this purpose; but the Swami, for reasons best known to himself, objected to the proposal.

It so happened that some time before the Swami came to Belgaum, Haripada Babu's wife had expressed a desire to him to be initiated by a Guru. He had replied, "You should choose one upon whom I could look with veneration, otherwise you will neither be happy nor reap any benefit thereby. If we meet any really holy man, both you and I will take initiation from him." The wife had agreed to this. Now Haripada Babu asked her if she would like to be the Swami's disciple. She had thought of this many times but was afraid the Swami would not accept her. So she said to her husband that she would consider herself blessed if the Swami would agree. Haripada Babu said, "We must try anyway. If we let this opportunity pass we may never find the like of him again." When Haripada Babu spoke to the Swami about the matter, the Swami protested, "It is very difficult to be a Guru. A Guru has to take on himself the sins of his disciple. Besides, I am a Sannyâsin. I want to free myself of all bondages and not add new ones. Moreover, the disciple should see the Guru at least three times before initiation." But Haripada Babu was not to be put off. Finding them determined the Swami finally initiated them.

XVII

THROUGH SOUTHERN INDIA TO CAPE COMORIN

With the exception of a short visit to Mormugao in the Portuguese seaside colony, the Swami came direct from Belgaum to Bangalore in the State of Mysore. For the first few days he lived an obscure life, but it was not long before he became the centre of attraction and made the acquaintance of Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, the Dewan of Mysore. A few minutes' conversation was sufficient to impress that remarkable man with the fact that the young Sannyâsin before him possessed "a magnetic personality and a divine force which were destined to leave their mark on the history of his country." He remained as the guest of this great statesman for some three to four weeks, during which time he met the distinguished officials and noblemen of the Court of Mysore. Wherever he went he was sought after not only by his co-religionists but by people of other faiths and creeds as well. Sir Seshadri Iyer was delighted with "this learned Sâdhu" and said on one occasion, "Many of us have studied much about religion. And yet what has it availed us? Here is this young man whose insight exceeds that of anyone I have ever known. It is simply wonderful. He must have been born a knower of religion, otherwise how could he at such a comparatively young age have gained all this knowledge and insight?" Thinking that the Maharaja of Mysore might be interested in this "young Achârya," Sir Seshadri Iyer introduced him to the Prince. The Swami, clad in his Geruâ, princely himself in his bearing, entered the audience-room of the Maharaja, Sri Châmarâjendra Wadiyar. The Prince was delighted with him. "Such brilliancy of thought, such charm of personality, such wide learning and such penetrating religious insight" quite won him over. The Swami became the guest of the State. Often he was closeted with the Maharaja, who sought his advice on many important matters.

One day, in the presence of his courtiers the Maharaja asked, "Swamiji, what do you think of my courtiers?" "Well, I think, Your Highness has a very good heart, but you are unfortunately surrounded by courtiers, and courtiers are courtiers everywhere!" came the bold answer. "No, no, Swamiji," the Maharaja protested, "my Dewan at least is not such. He is intelligent and trustworthy." "But, Your Highness," said the Swami, "a Dewan is one who robs the Maharaja and pays the Political Agent." The Prince changed the subject. Afterwards he called the Swami to his private apartments, and said, "My dear Swami, too much frankness is not always safe. If you continue to speak as you did in the presence of my courtiers, I am afraid you will be poisoned by someone." The Swami burst out, "What! Do you think an honest Sannyâsin is afraid of speaking the truth, even though it cost him his very life? Suppose, Your Highness, your son should ask me on the morrow, 'Swamiji, what do you think of my father?' Am I to attribute to you all sorts of virtues which I am quite aware you do not possess? Shall I speak falsely? Never!" But with what love and regard he spoke of this Maharaja in his absence! It was the Swami's habit to take one to task for one's weaknesses, but behind one's back he had nothing but praise for one's virtues, while the defects were disregarded.

During his stay at the Court, the Swami met a noted Austrian musician, with whom he discussed European music. All were amazed at the Swami's knowledge of European music. Another day he met an electrician, who was engaged in an electric installation in the palace. Casually the talk turned upon the subject of electricity, and here also the Swami showed himself to be quite at home.

During his stay in Mysore a great assembly of Pandits was held in the palace-hall and the Swami was invited to be present. The Prime Minister was the Chairman; the topic was the Vedânta. After the Pandits had finished the Swami was invited to speak. In telling language, now with epigrams, now with great eloquence, the Swami explained the ideas of the Vedânta, and the Pandits with one voice applauded him.

Pleased beyond measure with the Swami, the Prime Minister one day requested him to accept some presents from him, and ordered one of his secretaries to take him to the most expensive shop in the Bazar and purchase for him anything that he might like to have. To gratify his host the Swami accompanied the man, who took his cheque-book with him, ready to write a cheque for as much as one thousand rupees. The Swami was like a child; he looked at everything, admired many things, and in the end said, "My friend, if the Dewan wishes me to buy anything I desire, let me have the very best cigar in the place." Emerging from the store, the Swami lighted the cigar, which cost a shilling only, and drove to the palace, eminently satisfied with his purchase.

One day the Swami was called to the apartments of the Prince, and the Prime Minister went with him. The Maharaja asked, "Swamiji, what can I do for you?" The Swami, evading a direct reply, burst forth into an eloquent description of his mission. He dwelt on the condition of India, saying that India's possession was philosophical and spiritual, and that it stood in need of modern scientific ideas as well as a thorough organic reform; that it was India's place to give what treasure it possessed to the peoples of the West, and that he himself intended going to America to preach the gospel of Vedânta to the Western nations. And the Prince promised, then and there, the necessary money to defray his travelling expenses. But for some reason best known to himself, perhaps because of his vow first of all to visit Râmeswaram, the Swami refused the generous offer of the Maharaja at this time.

The longer the Swami remained with the Maharaja, the greater became the latter's attachment to him. When the Swami spoke of departing, he was visibly distressed and requested him to stay a few days more. He added, "Swamiji, I must have something with me as a remembrance of your personality. So, allow me to take a phonographic record of your voice. This the Swami consented to, and even now the record remains preserved in the palace, though it has long since become indistinct. In truth, so great was the admiration of this ruler for the Swami that he proposed to worship his feet, even as one worships those of one's Guru; but this the Swami did not allow him to do.

Some few days later, the Swami said that it was high time for his departure. Hearing this, the Prince desired to load him with rich presents. The Swami declined the offer. But the Maharaja insisted. The Swami said, "Well, Your Highness, if you persist in offering me something, then please give me a non-metallic Hookah. That will be of some use to me." Thereupon the Maharaja presented him with a beautiful rosewood pipe, delicately carved. On the Swami's departure the ruler bowed at his feet, and the Prime Minister made many unsuccessful efforts to thrust a roll of currency notes into his pocket. The Swami finally said, "If you desire to do anything for me, please purchase my ticket to Trichur. I am on my way, as you know, to Râmeswaram, but I shall halt for a few days in Cochin." Realising that the Swami would not allow him to do more for him, the Prime Minister purchased a second-class ticket and gave him a letter of introduction to Mr. Sankariah, the acting Dewan of Cochin.

At Trichur he remained only a few days, and then left for the southernmost part of India. He passed through Malabar and was particularly taken with the grand and picturesque scenery of Travancore. He visited Trivandrum, the capital city, where he stayed with Professor Sundararâma Iyer, the tutor to the First Prince, the nephew of the Maharaja of Travancore. The celebrated scholar, Mr. Rangâchâriar of Madras, then Professor of Chemistry at the Maharaja's College, met him as well. Mr. S. K. Nair of Travancore says:

> "Both these gentlemen, who were themselves erudite scholars in English and Sanskrit, found great pleasure and derived much benefit by constant conversation with the Swami. Anyone who became closely acquainted with him could not but be struck with his powerful personality and be drawn to him. He had the wonderful faculty of answering many men on many questions at one and the same time. It might be a talk on Spencer, or some thought of Shakespeare or Kâlidâsa, Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the Jewish history, the growth of Aryan civilisation, the Vedas, Islam or Christianity,—whatever the question, the Swami was ready with an appropriate answer. . . . Sublimity and simplicity were written boldly on his features. A clean heart, a pure

and austere life, an open mind, a liberal spirit, a wide outlook and broad sympathy were the redeeming characteristics of the Swami."

During his visit here he taught in private the necessity of many reforms affecting the whole Indian nation, and of the necessity of raising the masses. Professor Sundararama Iyer in writing of the Swami's stay with him for nine days at Trivandrum says:[1]

"I met Swami Vivekananda for the first time at Trivandrum in December, 1892, and was privileged to see and know a good deal of him. . . . He came to me accompanied by his Mohammedan guide. My second son, a little boy of twelve, took him for, and announced him to me as, a Mohammedan too, as he well might from the Swami's costume, which was quite unusual for a Hindu Sannyâsin of Southern India. . . . Almost the first thing he asked me to do was to arrange for his Mohammedan attendant's meal. This companion was a peon in the Cochin State service and had been detailed to accompany him to Trivandrum by the Secretary to the Dewan, Mr. W. Ramaiya. . . . The Swami had taken almost nothing but a little milk during the two previous days, but it was only after his Mohammedan peon had been provided with food and had taken his leave that he gave any thought to his own needs. After a few minutes' conversation I found that the Swami was a mighty man. . . . When I asked him what food he was accustomed to, he replied, 'Anything you like, we Sannyâsins have no preferences.' . . .

"On learning that the Swami was a Bengalee, I made the observation that the Bengalee nation had produced many great men and, foremost of them all, the Brahmo preacher, Keshub Chandra Sen. It was then that the Swami mentioned to me the name, and expatiated briefly on the eminent spiritual endowments of his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, and took my breath completely away by the remark that Keshub was a mere child when compared with Sri Ramakrishna,—that not only he, but many eminent Bengalees of a generation past had been influenced by the sage,— that Keshub had in later life received the benefit of his inspiration and had undergone considerable change for the better in his religious views,—that many Europeans had sought the acquaintance of Sri Ramakrishna and regarded him as a semi-divine personage, —and that no less a man than the late Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, Mr. C. H. Tawney, had written a paper on the character, genius, catholicity and inspiring power of the great sage.

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[1] The narration has been condensed at places to economise space.

" . . . The Swami's presence, his voice, the glitter of his eye, and the flow of his words and ideas were so inspiring that I excused myself that day from attending at the Palace of the late Mârtanda Varmâ, the First Prince of Travancore, who was studying for his M. A. degree under my tuition. . . . In the evening we went to the house of Prof. Rangacharya, Professor of Chemistry in the Trivandrum College, . . . who was even then at the height of his reputation as a scholar and man of science throughout Southern India. Not finding him at home, we drove to the Trivandrum Club. There I introduced the Swami to various gentlemen present and to Prof. Rangacharya when he came in later on, to the late Prof. Sundaram Pillai, M. A., and others, among whom I distinctly remember a late Brâhman Dewan Peshkar and my friend Nârâyana Menon. . . . owing to an incident which, however trifling in itself, brought out a prominent characteristic of the Swami,—how he noted closely all that was passing around him, how he combined with his rare gentleness and sweetness of temper, the presence of mind and the power of retort which could quickly silence an opponent. Mr. Narayana Menon had, while leaving the Club earlier in the evening, saluted the Brâhman Dewan Peshkar, and the latter had returned it in the time-honoured fashion in which Brâhmans who maintain old forms of etiquette return the salute of Sudras, i.e., by raising the left hand a little higher than the right. . . . As we were dispersing, the Dewan Peshkar made his obeisance to the Swami, which the latter returned in the manner usual with Hindu monks by simply uttering the name of Narayana. This roused the Peshkar's ire, for he wanted the Swami's obeisance in the fashion in which he had made his own. The Swami turned on him and said: 'If you can exercise your customary form of etiquette in returning Narayana Menon's greeting, why should you resent my own adoption of the Sannyâsin's customary mode in acknowledging your obeisance to me?' This reply had the desired effect, and next day the gentleman's brother came to us to convey an apology for the awkward incident of the night previous. Short as his stay had been at the Club premises, the Swami's personality had made an impression on all. . . .

" The Swami paid a visit the next day to Prince Martanda Varma, who had, when informed by me of the remarkable intellectual and imposing presence of my visitor, expressed a desire for an interview. Of course, I accompanied the Swami and was present at the ensuing conversation. The Swami happened to mention his visits to various Native Princes and courts during his travels. This greatly interested the Prince, who interrogated him regarding his impressions. The Swami then told him that, of all the Hindu Ruling Princes he had met, he had been most impressed with the capacity, patriotism, energy and foresight of H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda,—that he had also known and greatly admired the high qualities of the small Rajput Chief of Khetri,—and that, as he came further south, he had found a growing deterioration in the character and capacity of Indian Princes and Chiefs. The Prince then asked him if he had seen his uncle, the ruler of Travancore. The Swami had not yet had time to arrange for a visit to His Highness. I may here mention that a visit was arranged later for two days through the good offices of the Dewan, Mr. Sankara Subbier. The Maharaja received the Swami, inquired after his welfare, and told him that the Dewan would provide him with every convenience during his stay both in Trivandrum and elsewhere within the State. The visit lasted only for two or three minutes, and so the Swami returned a little disappointed. . . .

" To return to the Swami's conversation with the Prince. . . . The Swami then made an earnest inquiry regarding Prince Martanda Varma's studies, and his aims in life. The Prince replied that he was taking an interest in the doings of the people of Travancore, resolving to do what he could, as a leading and loyal subject of the Maharaja and as a member of the ruling family, to advance their welfare. The Prince was struck, like all others who had come in contact with him, with the Swami's striking figure and attractive features ; and being an amateur photographer, asked the Swami to sit for his photograph. . . .

" . . . The Swami found me much inclined to orthodox Hindu modes of life and beliefs. Perhaps that was why he spoke a good deal in the vein suited to my tastes and views, though occasionally he burst out into spirited denunciation of the observance of mere Desâchâra, or local usage. . . .

"The Swami once made a spirited attack on the extravagant claims put forth by science on men's allegiance. 'If religion has its superstitions,' the Swami remarked, 'science has its superstitions too. Both the mechanical and evolutionary theories are, on examination, found inadequate and unsatisfying, and still there are large numbers of men who speak of the entire universe as an open secret. Agnosticism has also bulked large in men's esteem, but has only betrayed its ignorance and arrogance by ignoring the laws and truths of the Indian science of thought-control. Western psychology has miserably failed to cope with the superconscious aspects and laws of human nature. Where European science has stopped short, Indian psychology comes in and explains, illustrates and teaches how to render real the laws appertaining to higher states of existence and experience. Religion alone—and especially the religion of the Indian sages—can understand the subtle and secret workings of the human mind and conquer its unspiritual cravings so as to realise the One Existence and comprehend all else as its limitation and manifestation when under the bondage of matter.' Another subject on which the Swami spoke was the distinction between the world of gross matter (Laukika) and the world of fine matter (Alaukika). The Swami explained how both kept man within the bondage of the senses, and only he who rose superior to them could attain the freedom which is the aim of all life and raise himself above the petty vanities of the world, whether of men or gods. The Swami spoke to me of the institution of caste, and held that the Brâhman would continue to live as long as he found unselfish work to do and freely gave of his knowledge and all to the rest of the population. In the actual words of the Swami which are still ringing in my ears, 'The Brâhman has done great things for India; he is destined to do greater things for India in the future.' The Swami also declared himself sternly against all interference with the Shâstric usages and injunctions in regard to the status and marriage of women. Women, like the lower classes and castes, must receive a Sanskrit education, imbibe the ancient spiritual culture, and realise in practice all the spiritual ideals of the Rishis, and then they would take into their own hands all questions affecting their own status and solve them in the light thrown on them by their own knowledge of the truths of religion and the enlightened perception of their own needs and requirements. . . .

" On the third and fourth day of the Swami's stay with me, I sent information to a valued friend of mine in Trivandrum, . . . M. R. Ry. S. Rama Rao, Director of Vernacular Instruction in Travancore. . . . I remember vividly how once Mr. Rama Rao wished the Swami to explain Indriya Nigraha, the restraint of the senses. The Swami launched forth into a vivid story very much like what is usually told of Lilâ-Suka, the famous singer of *Krishna Karnâmritam.* The picture he gave of the last stage in which the hero is taken to Vrindavan and puts out his own eyes in repentance for his amorous pursuit of a Sett's daughter and his resolve to end his days in unswerving meditation on the divine Sri Krishna at the place of His childhood on earth, remains with me even after the lapse of twenty-one years, with somewhat of the effect of those irresistibly charming and undying notes on the flute by the late miraculous musician, Sarabha Sâstriar, of Kumbakonam. The Swami's concluding words were, ' Even this extreme step (of putting out the eyes) must, if necessary, be taken as a preliminary to the restraint of the wandering and unsubjugated senses and the consequent turning of the mind towards the Lord.'

" On the third or fourth day of his stay, I made enquiries, at the Swami's request, regarding the whereabouts of Mr. Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya, Assistant to the Accountant-General, Madras. . . . From that time on the Swami used to spend his mornings and dine with Mr. Bhattacharya. One day, however, when I complained that he was giving all his time to Mr. Bhattacharya, the Swami made a characteristic reply, ' We, Bengalees, are a clannish people.' He said also that Mr. Bhattacharya had been his school or college mate, and that he had an additional claim for consideration as he was the son of the late world-renowned scholar, Pandit Mahesh Chandra Nyâyaratna, formerly the Principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College. The Swami also told me that he had long eaten no fish, as the South Indian Brâhmans, whose guest he had been throughout his South Indian tour, were forbidden both fish and flesh, and would fain avail himself of this opportunity to have his accustomed fare. I at once expressed my loathing for fish or flesh as food. The Swami said in reply that the ancient Brâhmans of India were accustomed to take meat and even beef and were called upon to kill cows and other animals in Yajnas or for giving Madhuparka[1] to guests. He also held that the introduction and spread of Buddhism had led to the gradual discontinuance of flesh as food, though the Hindu Sâstras had always expressed a theoretical preference for those who avoided the use of flesh-foods,—and that the disfavour into which flesh had fallen was one of the chief causes of the gradual decline of the national strength, and the final overthrow of the national independence of the united ancient Hindu races and states of India. . . . The Swami's opinion, at least as expressed in conversation with me, was that the Hindus must freely take to the use of animal food if India was at all to cope with the rest of the world in the present race for power and predominance among the world's communities, whether within the British Empire, or beyond its limits. . .

" Once a visitor, the Assistant Dewan or Peshkar in the Huzoor Office, Trivandrum, Mr. Piravi Perumal Pillai, detained the Swami from his usual visit to his Bengalee countryman, Mr. Bhattacharya. He came to ascertain what the Swami knew of the various cults and religions in India and elsewhere, and began by voicing objections to the Advaita Vedânta. He soon found out that the Swami was a master from whose stores it was more important to draw what one could for inspiration without loss of time than to examine what were the depths and heights in which his mind could range. I saw the Swami exhibit on this occasion . . . his rare power of gauging in a moment the mental reach of a self-confident visitor, and turning him unconsciously to suitable ground and giving him the benefit of his guidance and inspiration. On the present occasion, the Swami happened to quote from Lalita Vistâra some verses descriptive of Buddha's Vairâgya and in such an entrancingly melodious voice that the visitor's heart quite melted ; and the Swami skilfully utilised his listener's mood to make a lasting impression of Buddha's great renunciation, his unflinching search after truth, his final discovery of it and his unwearied ministry of forty-five years among men and women of all castes, ranks and conditions of life. The discourse occupied nearly an hour, and at its close the Swami's visitor was so visibly affected and acknowledged himself as feeling so much raised for the time being above the sordid realities and vanities of life, that he made many devout prostrations at the Swami's feet and declared, when leaving, that he had never seen his like and would never forget the discourse.

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[1] A mixture of honey containing meat etc., given to an honoured guest as a respectful offering.

" . . . Once I happened to ask him to deliver a public lecture. The Swami said that he had never before spoken in public and would surely prove a lamentable and ludicrous failure. Upon this I inquired how, if this were true, he could face the august assembly of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago at which he told me he had been asked by the Maharaja of Mysore to be present as the representative of Hinduism. The Swami gave me a reply which at the time seemed to me decidedly evasive, namely, that if it was the will of the Supreme that he should be made His mouthpiece and do a great service to the cause of truth and holy living, He surely would endow him with the gifts and qualities needed for it. I said I was incredulous as to the probability or possibility of a special intervention of this kind. . . . He at once came down on me like a sledge-hammer, denouncing me as one who, in spite of my apparent Hindu orthodoxy so far as my daily observances and verbal professions went, was at heart a sceptic, because I seemed to him prepared to set limits to the extent of the Lord's power of beneficent interposition in the affairs of the universe.

" On another occasion, too, some difference of opinion existed in regard to a question of much importance in Indian ethnology. The Swami held that wherever a Brâhman was found with a dark skin, it was clearly a case of atavism, due to Dravidian admixture. To this I replied that colour was essentially a changeable feature in man and largely dependent on such conditions as climate, food, the nature of the occupation as entailing an outdoor or indoor life, and so on. The Swami combated my view and maintained that the Brâhmans were as much a mixed race as the rest of mankind, and that their belief in their racial purity was largely founded on fiction. I quoted high authority—C. L. Brace and others—against him in regard to the purity of Indian races, but the Swami was obdurate and maintained his own view.

" During all the time he stayed, he took captive every heart within the home. To every one of us he was all sweetness, all tenderness, all grace. My sons were frequently in his company, and one of them still swears by him and has the most vivid and endearing recollections of his visit and of his striking personality. The Swami learned a number of Tamil words and took delight in conversing in Tamil with the Brâhman cook in our home. . . . When he left, it seemed for a time as if the light had gone out of our home. . . ."

The Swami next went eastwards in the direction of Râmeswaram, stopping on the way at Madura where he met the Raja of Râmnâd, Bhâskara Setupati, to whom he had a letter of introduction. This devout Prince, who was one of the most enlightened of India's noblemen, became a devoted admirer and disciple of the Swami. To him the Swami expressed many of his ideas pertaining to the education of the masses and the improvement of agricultural conditions,—of the present problems of India and her great possibilities. The Prince persistently urged the Swami to go to the Parliament of Religions that was about to be held at Chicago, saying that that would be the most favourable opportunity of drawing the attention of the world to the spiritual light of the East and also of laying the foundation of his future work in India. He encouraged him and promised to help him. Being eager to visit Rameswaram, the Swami took leave of the Raja, telling him that he would let him know his decision about going to America in the near future.

Rameswaram is the Benares of Southern India. It is the holiest of holy places, immortalised in the Ramayana, in the journey of Rama to Lanka (Ceylon) in search of his abducted Queen Sita. The great temple at Rameswaram is entered by a gate one hundred feet in height. The glory of the temple is its great corridors and open galleries. It is said that Sri Ramachandra on his return from Lanka after having defeated and slain Râvana founded this temple and worshipped Siva there. The Swami was happy to have accomplished one of the most cherished purposes of his life.

The Swami next journeyed on to Kanyâkumâri, (Cape Comorin) the southernmost extremity of India. Now was finished that great pilgrimage which extends northward to those distant snow-clad regions where the Himalayas pass into Tibet. He thought of the sacredness of India and of the deep, deep spiritual life of which Badarikâsrama and Kanyakumari were the towering landmarks. He was eager as a child to see the Mother; reaching the shrine he fell prostrate in ecstasy before Her image. Worship finished, he crossed to a rock which was separated from the mainland. About him the ocean tossed and stormed, but in his mind there was even a greater tempest. And there, sitting on the last stone of India, he passed into a deep meditation upon the present and future of his country. He sought for the root of her downfall, and with the vision of a seer he understood why India had been thrown from the pinnacle of glory to the depths of degradation. The simple monk was transformed into a great reformer, a great organiser and a great master-builder of the nation. There, where all was silence, he thought of the purpose and fruition of the Indian world. He thought not of Bengal, or of Maharashtra, or of the Punjab, but of INDIA and of its very life. All the centuries were arranged before him, and he perceived the realities and potentialities of Indian culture. He saw the whole of India organically and synthetically, as a great master-builder sees the whole architectural design. He saw religion as the very blood and life and spirit of India's millions. Most vividly did he realise in the silence of his heart, "India shall rise only through a renewal and restoration of that highest spiritual consciousness which has made of India, at all times, the cradle of the nations and the cradle of the Faith." He saw her greatness and her weaknesses as well, the central evil of which was that the nation had lost its individuality. The only hope was, to his mind, a restatement of the culture of the Rishis. He found that religion was not the cause of India's downfall, but the fact that true religion was nowhere followed, for religion when dynamic was the most potent of all powers.

His soul brooded with infinite tenderness and infinite anguish over India's poverty. What use is the Dharma, he thought, without the masses? Everywhere and at all times he saw that the poor and the lowly had been oppressed and downtrodden for hundreds of years by every Power that had come in the changes of fortune to rule them. The autocracy of priesthood, the despotism of caste, the terrible demarcations that these created within the social body, making the majority of the followers of Dharma the outcasts of the earth—these the Swami saw as almost insurmountable barriers to the progress of the Indian nation. His heart throbbed with the great masses; he seemed to have entered, in some supreme mode of feeling, that world of India's outcasts and poverty-stricken millions. In their sufferings he found himself sharing, at their degradation he found himself humiliated, in their lot his great heart longed to share. Agony was in his soul when he thought how those who prided themselves on being the custodians of Dharma had held down the masses for ages upon ages. In a letter written many months after, one catches the ardour and the intensity of his meditation here. The Swami writes, "In view of all this, specially of the poverty and ignorance, I got no sleep. At Cape Comorin, sitting in Mother Kumari's temple, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock,—I hit upon a plan: We are so many

Sannyâsins wandering about, and teaching the people metaphysics,—it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, 'An empty stomach is no good for religion?' That those poor people are leading the life of brutes, is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them under foot."[1]

But what was the remedy? The clear-eyed Swami saw that renunciation and service must be the twin ideals of India. If the national life could be intensified through these channels everything else would take care of itself. Renunciation alone had always been the great dynamo of strength in India. So in this critical time he looked to the men of renunciation to uphold the cause of India's downtrodden masses. He hit upon a plan. "Suppose," he continues in the same letter, "some disinterested Sannyâsins, bent on doing good to others, go from village to village, disseminating education and seeking in various ways to better the conditions of all down to the Chandâla, through oral teachings, and by means of maps, cameras, globes and such other accessories,—will not that bring forth good in time? All these plans I cannot write out in this short letter. The long and short of it is—if the mountain does not come to Mahomet, Mahomet must go to the mountain. The poor are too poor to come to schools and Pathsâlâs; they will gain nothing by reading poetry and all that sort of thing. We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and *raise the masses.* The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, all have trampled them under foot. Again the force to raise them must come from inside, that is, from the orthodox Hindus. In every country evil exists not with, but against religion. Religion, therefore, is not to blame, but men."

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[1] *Complete Works,* Vol. VI, p. 225.

What could he do, a penniless Sannyâsin! In the midst of black despair, came to him the great light of inspiration. He had travelled through the length and breadth of India, and he was sure he could find in every town at least a dozen young men who would help him in his endeavour to uplift the masses. But where to get the necessary money? He asked for help, but got only lip sympathy. "Selfishness personified—are they to spend anything!" thus the Swami wrote later on. In his despair he looked to the infinite ocean, and a ray of light shot across his vision. Yes, he would cross the ocean and go to America in the name of India's millions. There he would earn money by the power of his brain and returning to India devote himself to carry out his plans for the regeneration of his countrymen or die in the attempt. Sri Ramakrishna would show him the way out, even if nobody in the world helped him in his work.

Ay, here at Kanyakumari was the culmination of days and days of thought on the problems of the Indian masses; here was the culmination of hours of longing that the wrongs of the masses might be righted. His eyes looked through a mist of tears across the great waters. His heart went out to the Master and to the Mother in a great prayer. From this moment his life was consecrated to the service of India, but particularly to the outcast Nârâyanas, to the starving Narayanas, to the millions of oppressed Narayanas of his land. To him, in this wonderful hour, even the final vision of Brahman in the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi and the bliss thereof became subservient to the overwhelming desire to give himself utterly and entirely for the good of the Indian people. And his soul was caught up in an ecstasy of vision of the Narayana Himself—the Supreme Lord of the Universe, whose love is boundless, whose pity knows no distinction between the high and the low, the pure and the vile, the rich and the poor. To him religion was no longer an isolated province of human endeavour; it embraced the whole scheme of things, not only the Dharma, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the meditation of Sages, the asceticism of great monks, the vision of the Most High, but the heart of the people, their lives, their hopes, their misery, their poverty, their degradation, their sorrows, their woes. And he saw that the Dharma, and even the Vedas, without the people, were as so much straw in the eyes of the Most High. Verily, at Kanyakumari the Swami was the Patriot and Prophet in one!

And so out of his meditation, as its very result, he determined to go to the West. He would make that intensely individualised and aggressively self-conscious West bow down to the Oriental experience as embodied in India's message to the world. That on which the monks concentrate as the ideal of the race, and the realisation of which affords them infinite ecstasy and insight—That in Its entirety he would preach to the West. And in the wake of that preaching by himself and others yet to come, India would rise, he knew, as a great light, ay, even as the Sun itself, illuminating the whole world. He would throw away even the bliss of the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi for the liberation of his fellow-men in India and abroad! Thus was the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna revealed to him in one of the most luminous visions of his life, the fruition of the deep meditations of many years. No wonder that he spoke of himself to one of his beloved Western disciples in later times as "A condensed India."

XVIII

FURTHER GLIMPSES OF PARIVRAJAKA LIFE

The life of a Parivrâjaka, or itinerant monk, is necessarily of a chequered character. Though we have endeavoured to follow the Swami's continuous journeying in some consecutive and chronological form, there are many gaps filled with numerous incidents concerning most of which the Swami maintained silence, for it was not his wont, unless solicited, to speak at length upon the experiences of these days. Some of these, however, he related, and before taking up the story of his advent in Madras, it will be well to gain a comprehensive survey of these disconnected but interesting happenings in order to realise the inner nature of the man and to bring into prominence some of the factors in the background of his life.

Once he had a strange vision. He saw an old man standing on the banks of the Indus and chanting Riks, or Vedic hymns, in a distinctly different way from the accustomed methods of intonation of today. The passage which he heard was:

आयाहि वरदे देवि त्र्यक्षरे ब्रह्मवादिनि ।
गायत्रि छन्दसां मातर्ब्रह्मयोनि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

"Oh, come Thou Effulgent One, Thou Bestower of Blessings, Signifier of Brahman in three letters! Salutation be to Thee, O Gâyatri, Mother of Vedic Mantras, Thou who hast sprung from Brahman!" The Swami believed that through this vision he had recovered the musical cadences of the earliest Aryan ancestors. He also found some remarkable similarity to this in the poetry of Sankarâchârya. Such a vision as this shows the extraordinary development of Yoġa powers in the Swami.

There is then the story of the Târi Ghât station told by a disciple:

" It was one of those scorching summer noons in the United Provinces, when the Swami alighted from the train at Tari Ghat. A cloak dyed in the usual Sannyâsin colour, and a third-class ticket for a station some distance away which someone had given him, were about his only belongings. He did not possess even a Kamandalu. He was not allowed by the porter to stay within the station-shed. So he sat down on the ground, leaning against a post of the waiting-shed for the third-class passengers.

" Of the motley crowd assembled there, we need mention only a middle-aged man of the North India trading-caste, a Baniyâ, who sat on a Durry (cotton mat) a little way off under the shelter of the shed almost opposite to the Swami. Recognising the Swami's starving condition, he had made merry at his expense as they journeyed in the same compartment the previous night. And when they stopped at different stations and the Swami, who was suffering intensely from thirst, was unable to obtain water from the water-bearers because he had no money to pay for it, the Baniya bought water to satisfy his own thirst and as he drank it taunted the Swami, saying, ' See here, my good man, what nice water this is! You being a Sannyâsin, and having renounced money, cannot purchase it and so you have the pleasure of going without it. Why don't you earn money as I do and have a good time of it?' He did not approve of Sannyâsa; no, he did not believe in giving up the world and money-making for an idea. In his opinion, it was only right that the Sannyâsin should starve, and so, when they both alighted at Tari Ghat, he took considerable pains to make it clear to the Swami by means of arguments, illustrations, and pleasantries that he got just what he deserved. For the Swami was in the burning sun whilst the Baniya seated himself in the shade. ' Look here,' he began again with a derisive smile curling his lips, ' what nice Puries and Laddus I am eating! You do not care to earn money, so you have to rest content with a parched throat and empty stomach and the bare ground to sit upon!' The Swami looked on calmly, not a muscle of his face moved.

"Presently there appeared one of the local inhabitants carrying a bundle and a tumbler in his right hand, a Durry under his left arm and an earthen jug of water in his left hand. He hurriedly spread the Durry in a clean spot, put on it the things he was carrying and called to the Swami, 'Do come, Bâbâji, and take the food I have brought for you!' The Swami was surprised beyond words. What did this mean? Who was this new-comer? The jeering Baniya's look was changed to one of blank amazement. The new-comer kept on insisting, 'Come on, Babaji, you must come and eat the food!' 'I am afraid you are making a mistake, my friend,' said the Swami. 'Perhaps you are taking me for somebody else. I do not remember having ever met you.' But the other cried out, 'No, no, you are the very Babaji I have seen!' 'What do you mean?' asked the Swami, his curiosity fully aroused, while his jocose friend stood gaping at the scene. 'Where have you seen me?' The man replied, 'Why, I am a sweetmeat vendor and was having my usual nap after my noon meal. And I dreamt that Sri Ramji was pointing you out to me and telling me that He was pained to see you without food from the day previous and that I should get up instantly, prepare some Puries and curry and bring them to you at the railway station with some sweetmeats, nice cold water, and a Durry for you to sit upon. I woke up, but thinking it was only a dream I turned on my side and slept again. But Sri Ramji, in His infinite graciousness, came to me again and actually pushed me to make me get up and do as He had said. I quickly prepared some Puries and curry, and taking some sweets which I had prepared this morning, some cold water and a Durry from my shop I ran here direct and recognised you at once from a distance. Now do come and have your meal while it is fresh. You must be very hungry.' One can imagine the Swami's feelings at this time. With all his heart the Swami thanked his simple host, while tears of love flowed from his eyes, but the kind man protested saying, 'No, no, Babaji! Do not thank me! It is all the will of Śri Ramji!' The jeering Baniya was quite taken aback at this incident, and begging the Swami's pardon for the ill words he had used towards him, he took the dust of his feet."

This incident, revealing Divine Providence as manifesting in the Swami's life, is complemented by an incident of a different character which occurred in Rajputana. Once when he was passing through that province he travelled with two Englishmen in the same carriage. They took him to be an ignorant Sâdhu and made jokes in English at his expense. The Swami sat as if he did not understand one word. When the train stopped at a station further on he asked the station-master in English for a glass of water. When his companions discovered that he knew English and had understood all they had said, they were much embarrassed at their vulgar conduct and asked him why it was that he had not shown any sign of resentment. He replied, "My friends, this is not the first time that I have seen fools!" The men showed fight, but seeing the Swami's strongly-built frame and undaunted spirit they thought better of it and apologised to him.

An amusing incident is told of the Swami to the effect that during one of his long railway travels his fellow-passenger was a learned occultist, who besieged him with all sorts of questions, asking whether he had been in the Himalayas, and whether he had met there any Mahâtmâs, possessed of all sorts of incredible powers. The Swami wishing to teach him a lesson, encouraged him to talk. Then, smiling within himself, he gave such a glowing description of the miraculous performances of the Mahâtmâs that his listener gaped in amazement. Then he was asked if they had told him anything about the duration of the present cycle. The Swami said that he had a long talk on that subject with the Mahâtmâs, who spoke to him on the coming end of the cycle and the part they would play in the regeneration of mankind to bring about the Satya-yuga once more, and so on and so forth. The credulous man hung upon every word that fell from the Swami's lips! Gratified with the acquisition of so much new knowledge, he invited the Swami to partake of some food, which he readily consented to do, for he had not eaten anything for a whole day. His admirers out of respect had bought him a second-class ticket, but as he was then living up to the ideal of taking no thought for the morrow, they could not persuade him to take either money or food with him.

When the meal was over, the Swami regarded the man with much interest, and seeing that he had a great heart but because of his credulous nature had become entangled in pseudo-mysticism, spoke to him frankly and sternly, "You who boast so much of your learning and enlightenment, how could you unhesitatingly swallow such wild, fantastic tales!" The gentleman hung his head at this reproof and uttered not a word. Thinking of diverting him from his distorted notions of what constituted spirituality, the Swami said to him with great vehemence of feeling, "My friend, you look intelligent. It befits a person of your type to exercise your own discrimination. Spirituality has nothing to do with the display of psychical powers, which, when analysed, show that the man who deals with them is a slave of desire and a most egotistical person. Spirituality involves the acquisition of that true power which is character. It is the vanquishing of passion and the rooting out of desire. All this chasing after psychical illusions, which means nothing in the solution of the great problems of our life, is a terrible waste of energy, the most intense form of selfishness, and leads to degeneracy of mind. It is this nonsense which is demoralising our nation. What we need now is strong common sense, a public spirit and a philosophy and religion which will make us *men*."

The gentleman on hearing this was overcome by emotion, and understood the righteousness of the Swami's attitude. He assured him that he would thenceforth follow his valuable precepts.

Speaking to Girish Babu of the experience of his Parivrâjaka days, the Swami told of an event, of a more pleasant character, which took place in Khetri. To use the Swami's own words:

" In the course of my wanderings I was in a certain place where people came to me in crowds and asked for instruction. Though it seems almost unbelievable, people came and made me talk for three days and nights without giving me a moment's rest. They did not even ask me whether I had eaten. On the third night, when all the visitors had left, a low-caste poor man came up to me and said, ' Swamiji, I am much pained to see that you have not had any food these three days. You must be very tired and hungry. Indeed, I have noticed that you have not even taken a glass of water.' I thought that the Lord Himself had come in the form of this low-caste man to test me. I asked him, ' Can you give me something to eat?' The man said, ' Swamiji, my heart is yearning to give you food, but how can you eat Chapâtis baked by my hands! If you allow me I shall be most glad to bring flour, lentils, and other things, and you may cook them yourself.' At that time, according to the monastic rules, I did not touch fire. So I said to him, ' You had better give me the Chapatis cooked by you. I will gladly take them.' Hearing this, the man shrank in fear ; he was a subject of the Maharaja of Khetri and was afraid that if the latter came to hear that he, a cobbler, had given Chapatis to a Sannyâsin, he would be severely dealt with and possibly banished from the State. I told him, however, that he need not fear and that the Maharaja would not punish him. He did not believe me. But out of the kindness of his heart, even though he feared the consequence, he brought me the cooked food. I doubted at that time whether it would have been more palatable if Indra, the King of the Devas, should have held a cup of nectar in a golden basin before me. I shed tears of love and gratitude and thought, ' Thousands of such large-hearted men live in lowly huts, and we despise them as low castes and untouchables!' When I became well acquainted with the Maharaja, I told him of the noble act of this man. Accordingly, within a few days the latter was called to the presence of the Prince. Frightened beyond words, the man came shaking all over, thinking that some dire punishment was to be inflicted upon him. But the Maharaja praised him and put him beyond all want."

Once it occurred to the Swami, in the course of his itineracy, that going from place to place and begging for food from door to door was after all not the aim of his life for the realisation of which he had renounced his home. In a letter written about this time to one of his brother disciples he says with great depression, "I am going about taking food at others' houses shamelessly and without the least compunction like a crow." He thought, "Let me beg no longer! What benefit is it to the poor to feed me? If they can save a handful of rice, they can feed their own children with it. Anyway, what is the use of sustaining this body if I cannot realise God?" A desperate ascetic mood came upon him, and a terrible spiritual dissatisfaction overwhelmed him, as sometimes occurs with great mystics, and he determined in a moment of supreme despair to plunge into a dense forest and, like some great Rishi of old, let the body drop from sheer starvation and exhaustion. Thereupon he entered into a thick forest which stretched for miles and miles before him, and walked the whole day without a morsel of food. The evening approached. He was faint from fatigue and sank to the ground beneath a tree, fixing his mind upon the Lord, his eyes looking vacantly in the distance.

After some time he saw a tiger approaching. Nearer and nearer it came. Then it sat down at some distance from him. The Swami thought, "Ah! This is right, both of us are hungry. After all, this body has not been the vehicle for absolute realisation, and as by it no good to the world will possibly be done, it is well and desirable that it should be of service at least to this hungry beast." He was lying there all the while calm and motionless, waiting every moment for the tiger to pounce upon him, but for some reason or other the animal ran off in another direction. The Swami, however, thought that it might yet return and waited, but the tiger did not come. He spent the night in the jungle beneath the shelter of the tree, holding communion with his own soul. And with the approach of dawn, pondering in the silence of that forest on the guiding Providence of the Most High, a great sense of power came upon him. The full contents of this experience were known only to himself.

Once, in the course of his weary marches on foot, he became dizzy from exhaustion and could walk no farther. The sun was intolerably hot. Summoning his strength he reached a tree near by and sat down beneath its spreading branches. A sense of unutterable fatigue came over his limbs. Then, as a great light shines suddenly in the darkness, the thought came to him, "Is it not true that within the Soul resides all power? How can it be dominated by the senses and the body? How can I be weak?" Therewith a sudden energy flowed through his body. His mind became luminous. His senses recovered themselves, and he arose and journeyed on, determined that he would never yield to weakness. Many times he was in such a state in his Parivrâjaka life; but he asserted his higher nature again and again, and strength flowed back to him. Says the Swami in one of his lectures in California:

> "Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore, and weary; for days and days I had had no food, and often could walk no farther; I would sink down under a tree, and life would seem to be ebbing away. I could not speak, I could scarcely think, but at last the mind reverted

to the idea: 'I have no fear nor death; never was I born nor died; I never hunger nor thirst. I am It! I am It. The whole of nature cannot crush me; it is my servant. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of lords and God of gods! Regain thy lost empire! Arise and walk and stop not!' And I would rise up, reinvigorated, and here am I, living, today. Thus, whenever the darkness comes, assert the reality and everything adverse must vanish. For, after all it is but a dream. Mountain-high though the difficulties appear, terrible and gloomy though all things seem, they are but Mâyâ. Fear not,—it is banished. Crush it, and it vanishes. Stamp upon it, and it dies."

At another time, whilst travelling afoot in Cutch, he was passing through a desert. The scorching rays of the sun poured down upon him. His throat was parched, and nowhere near did his eyes find a human abode. On and on he went, until he saw a village with inviting pools of water, and he was happy at the prospect of finding food, drink and shelter there. He hastened his steps, believing that he would soon be there. After walking on and on for a long time the village was as far off as ever! Finally, in despair he sat down upon the sands and looked about him. Where was the village! Where had it gone! And then he knew—it was only a mirage! And he thought, "Such is life! Such is the deceit of Mâyâ." He arose and journeyed on, and though he saw the mirage again, he was no more deceived, for he knew what it was. When in the West he gave a series of lectures on Mâyâ, he compared Mâyâ to a mirage, using this experience as an illustration.

Once he said in the presence of a disciple, as if speaking to himself, "O the days of suffering I passed through! Once after eating nothing for three days I fell down senseless on the road. I did not know how long I was in that state. When I regained my consciousness I found my clothing wet through by a shower of rain. Drenched in it, I felt somewhat refreshed. I arose and after trudging along some distance I reached a monastery, and my life was saved by the food that I received there."

Many, many were the times when the Swami faced danger, hardship and want in the solitude as the wandering monk. Oftentimes there was nothing in his possession save perhaps a photograph of Sri Ramakrishna and a copy of the Gita. In Central India, probably when he left Khandwa, he had many trying experiences with people who refused to give him food and shelter. It was in that period that he lived with a family of the sweeper caste and saw the priceless worth and potentialities that often lie within the lowest of the low. It might have been this experience and similar others of human contact that made him realise the distressing condition of his land. Poverty, wretchedness and utmost misery he saw on every side, and his heart was overwhelmed with pity. Such experiences as these made of him a great patriot and champion of the depressed millions.

At one time, during his wanderings in the Himalayas, he lived with a family of Tibetans with whom polyandry is the prevailing custom. And this family consisted of six brothers with but one common wife. When the Swami became sufficiently familiar with them, he argued with his hosts concerning polyandry, becoming quite fervent in his denunciation. The men became much vexed with him and asked him, "How can you, a Sâdhu, bring yourself to teach others to be selfish! 'This is a thing which only I should possess and enjoy to the exclusion of any other,'—is not such an idea wrong? Why should we be so selfish as to have each a wife for himself? Brothers should share everything amongst themselves, even their wives." Though the answer might have its logical weakness, the Swami was greatly astonished at such a reply from such simple-minded mountaineers. And, the Swami thought, one may argue for or against almost anything. It was this and similar incidents which caused him to think deeply over the customs and manners of various peoples, as he met them in his travels through many provinces from the Himalayas to the southernmost part of India. It certainly broadened his perspective and made him see life from all angles. It made him weigh well in the balance the arguments for as well as against any new experience or circumstance or custom which chanced to cross his path. He endeavoured to see the standards of social life and of ethics of all nations and races, through their eyes.

Before closing the chapter of his days of itineracy it would be relevant to think over the changes in the Swami's personality and temperament since he started on this life from Baranagore. Before this he had not seen much of the outside world. This wandering life had a great educational value for him, opening up as it did opportunities for original thought and observation. The synthetic ideas absorbed at Dakshineswar were put into practice through the Parivrâjaka experience. As one of his brother disciples has said of him, "He was constantly on the look-out for new experiences at this time, constantly gathering ideas, making contrasts and comparisons, saturating his mind with the religious and social ideas of every province, studying various systems of theology and philosophy and finding out the inherent worth of all the varied Indian peoples whose life he closely observed." The most striking element in all his observations was his tireless search for unity in the world of Indian ideals. He finally realised that underlying all the diversity of customs and traditions was the oneness of the spiritual vision. The difference between the Mohammedan and the Hindu world he found to be only apparent, for the Mohammedans as a race were as generous and as human and as Indian at heart as the Hindus, and the enlightened among them understood and appreciated the culture of Hinduism and the intimate relationship between the philosophy of Sufism and Advaita Vedânta and other social and religious elements. So he came to think of both Mohammedans and Hindus as Indians first; and this automatically obliterated for him the distinction between the followers of the two great faiths. With this supreme synthetic outlook of the Indian world and the soundness of Indian ideals the Swami arrived at Madras, which practically terminated his days of wandering.

XIX

IN MADRAS AND HYDERABAD

It was in the last days of the year 1892, when the Swami arose from his meditation at Kanyakumâri, and wended his way to Madras, a centre of orthodox learning and culture. From the shrine of the Mother he went afoot, journeying through Ramnâd and onwards, until he reached Pondicherry, a French Colony. Weary from long marches he rested there for some days, and met several young men who became his admirers and invited him to their homes.

It was at Pondicherry that the Swami had a lengthy and bitter discussion with an exceedingly bigoted orthodox Pandit upon many important topics relating to Hinduism and its reform. The Pandit, being of the old school, antagonised the Swami at every turn. He was not so much learned as he was violent, and he became brutal in his denunciation of the Swami's progressive ideas. The conversation turned on the question of sea voyage. When the Pandit could not hold his ground against the Swami he would often interrupt him blurting out in Sanskrit with wild gestures, "Kadâpi Na, Kadâpi Na," "Never, never!" "My friend," the Swami cried out at last, "what do you mean? Upon every educated Indian devolves the responsibility of submitting the contents of the Dharma to the test. For this reason we must come out of the limited grooves of the past and take a look at the world as it moves onwards to progress at the present day. And if we find that there are hide-bound customs which are impeding the growth of our social life or disturbing our philosophical outlook, it is time for us to take an advance step by eschewing them." The Swami spoke also concerning the uplift of the masses, and said that the time was at hand when the Sudras would arise and demand their rights and privileges. He insisted that it was the duty of the educated Indians to help the downtrodden masses by giving them education, to spread the ideal of social equality and to root out the tyranny of priestcraft and the evils of national disorganisation, which the perversion of the caste system and of the higher principles of religion had brought on.

Destiny works in strange ways. It so happened that Mr. Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya chanced to meet the Swami plodding up from Rameswaram, with staff and Kamandalu in hand. Learning that the Swami was on his way to Madras, Mr. Bhattacharya insisted that he should travel with him and be his guest. The Swami consented, and they started for Madras. There the Swami found awaiting him a dozen or more of the finest young men of the city, who in time became his disciples. From the day of his arrival he was besieged by numerous visitors.

From this time on the Swami seemed to be on the high road to public recognition. It was in Madras that many young men became his devoted adherents. It was here that he secured the funds wherewith he was enabled to go to America. It was in Madras that the message of his Master gained a ready acceptance. It was here, also, that his first work in India in the way of organisation and publication was commenced, and it was his Madrasi disciples who widely circulated his message even before his return from the West.

With the many eager inquirers who sought interviews with him the Swami would discuss religion, psychology, science, literature or history. One day, when the Swami was in an exalted mood in which all thought was sublimated, some one asked him, "Swamiji, why is it that in spite of their Vedântic thought the Hindus are idólaters?" The Swami with flashing eyes turned on the questioner and answered, "Because we have the Himalayas!" He meant thereby that, surrounded by Nature so sublime and soul-stirring, man cannot but fall down and adore.

The Swami's personality towered over everything. His thrilling musical voice, his songs, his strength of soul, his powerful intellect, his luminous and ready replies, his scintillating wit, his epigrams and eloquence held his hearers spell-bound. And day after day the number of those who came to the house of Mr. Bhattacharya increased. He combined a spirit of humility with what would seem to be at times an aggressive self-consciousness, for sometimes he would beg pardon of a Pandit who had insulted him, calling himself an ignorant fellow; at other times he would burst like a hurricane upon his audience, giving them no opportunity to escape from the currents of his thought. But all this was unostentatious and informal. He spoke no harsh words against anyone, but he did not refrain from criticism when necessary. For example, there was the case of the Pandit who asked him if there was any harm in giving up Sandhyâvandanam, or prayers performed in the morning, noon and evening, because of lack of time. "What!" cried the Swami almost ferociously, "Those giants of old, the ancient Rishis, who never walked but strode, of whom if you were but to think for a moment you would be shrivelled into a moth, they, sir, had time, and you have no time!" In that same meeting, when a Westernised Hindu spoke in a belittling manner of the "meaningless teachings" of the Vedic Seers, the Swami fell upon him with a thunderbolt vehemence, crying out, "How dare you criticise your venerable forefathers in such a fashion! A little learning has muddled your brain. Have you tested the science of the Rishis? Have you even as much as read the Vedas? There is the challenge thrown by the Rishis! If you dare oppose them, take it up."

To relieve the undue strain put upon himself by the constant influx of people, the Swami used to walk in the evening on the seashore. One day, when he saw the wretched and half-starved children of the fishermen working with their mothers, waist-deep in the water, tears filled his eyes, and he cried out, "O Lord, why dost Thou create these miserable creatures! I cannot bear the sight of them. How long, O Lord, how long!" Those who were in his company were overcome and burst into tears.

A party was arranged in his honour one evening. All the intellectual luminaries of Madras were present. The Swami declared himself to be an Advaitin, boldly, almost challengingly. A clique of intellectuals asked him, "You say you are one with God. Then all your responsibility is gone. What is there to check you when you do wrong, and when you stray from the right path?" The Swami replied crushingly, "If I honestly believe that I am one with God, I shall abominate vice and no check is needed!"

In the course of a similar conversation in the palace of the Raja of Ramnad, some one had jeered at him for his assertion that it was possible for a human being to see Brahman, the Unknown. Aroused at once, he exclaimed, "I have seen the Unknown!"

The Swami held several conversations at the

Literary Society of Triplicane, which had given him his first introduction to the public; many of its young members belonged to the social reform movement in Madras. But he saw that they were working from the wrong point of view, that of sweeping condemnation. In his repeated talks the Swami emphatically urged upon them the necessity of critically analysing foreign ideals and of avoiding the assimilation of irreligious foreign culture. He said that they should invoke the aid of all that was great and glorious in the past, otherwise the very foundations of the national structure would be undermined. He told them that he was not an enemy of social reform; on the contrary, he yearned for reforms, but they must come from within, and not from without, and must be constructive and not destructive.

There came to him an atheist, the Assistant Professor of Science in the Christian College, Singâravelu Moodaliar. He saw the pragmatic values of Christianity and criticised Hinduism. He came to argue, but at the end of the conversation he was converted to the Swami's way of thinking and became his ardent disciple. The Swami loved him very much and called him 'Kidi.' He said of him afterwards jocularly, "Cæsar said, 'I came, I saw, I conquered.' But Kidi came, he saw, and was conquered!" After a time Kidi devoted his life to the Swami's cause, and when at his suggestion the *Prabuddha Bharata* was started in Madras, Kidi became its honorary manager. He later renounced the world to lead the life of a recluse and died a saintly death.

Mr. V. Subramanya Iyer says that he went with some of his class-fellows to the house of Mr. Bhattacharya, intending to have some fun. They found the Swami smoking his Hookah in a sort of half-awake, half-dreamy state, seemingly in deep contemplation. One bolder than the others advanced and asked, "Sir, what is God?" The Swami smoked on as if entirely oblivious of the question. Then he raised his eyes, and said as if by way of reply, "Well, my fellow, what is energy?" When the boy and his companions were unable to give any real definition, the Swami roused himself and said, "What is this! You cannot define a simple word like 'energy,' which you use every day of your life, and yet you want me to define God!" They asked other questions, but the Swami's replies crushed them. After a time the boys left, but Mr. Iyer who was greatly impressed remained and accompanied the Swami and his disciples on his daily walk to the seashore. Casually the Swami asked Mr. Iyer, "Well, my boy, can you wrestle?" Receiving an answer in the affirmative the Swami said in fun, "Come, let us have a tussle." Surprised at the Swami's athletic skill and strength of muscle, Mr. Iyer called him, "Palwân Swami" or the "Athlete Swami."

It so happened that one day the Swami found the cook of Mr. Bhattacharya looking longingly at the Hookah which the Maharaja of Mysore had given him, and so he asked him, "Would you like to have this?" The Swami repeated his question, and seeing the man puzzled and afraid to say 'yes,' he then and there handed it to him. The man could not believe that he meant it. But when he actually had it in his hands, he was grateful beyond words, and those who heard of the incident saw what renunciation the Swami had, for he loved that Hookah, his only comfort.

It was customary with him throughout his life to give away whatever anyone admired in his possession. On one occasion in America a young man coveted the staff which he had used whilst journeying to many pilgrimages during his wandering days. He had brought it all the way from India and prized it for its sacred associations. But he gave it away instantly, saying, "What you admire is already yours!"

The Swami had a strange experience about this time. For some days, he was bothered by waves of psychic disturbance sent by some spirits. The spirits reported all sorts of false things to make his mind uneasy, which statements he learned later to be untrue. When they had thus annoyed him for some days he remonstrated, whereupon they told him of their miserable condition. The Swami thought over the matter, and one day repairing to the seashore he took a handful of sand as a substitute for rice and grain and offered it praying with his whole heart that these spirits might find rest. Thereafter they ceased to bother him, having attained peace.

In Madras the Swami gained numerous followers. The experience he had in Alwar was here intensified many times, for people flocked from all parts to hear him. More and more he revealed the strength, the purity and the effulgence of his soul, and his sweet personality captivated their hearts even as his ideas captivated their intellects. Mr. K. Vyâsa Rao, B.A., speaks as follows, in a reminiscent mood, of the Swami of these days and the impression he created:

> " A graduate of the Calcutta University, with a shaven head, a prepossessing appearance, wearing the garb of renunciation, fluent in English and Sanskrit, with uncommon powers of repartee, who sang 'with full-throated ease' as though he was attuning himself to the Spirit of the universe, and withal a wanderer on the face of the earth! The man was sound and stalwart, full of sparkling wit, with nothing but a scathing contempt for miracle-working agencies . . . ; one who enjoyed good dishes, knew how to appreciate the Hookah and the pipe, yet harped on renunciation with an ability that called forth admira-

tion and a sincerity that commanded respect. The young Bachelors and Masters of Arts were at their wits' end at the sight of such a phenomenon. There, they saw the man and saw how well he could stand his ground in wrestling and fencing in the arena of the Universal Soul; and when the hour of discussion gave way to lighter moods, they found that he could indulge in fun and frolic, in uncompromising denunciation and in startling *bon mots*. But everything else apart, what endeared him to all was the unalloyed fervour of his patriotism. The young man who had renounced all worldly ties and freed himself from bondage, had but one love, his country, and one grief, its downfall. These sent him into reveries which held his hearers spell-bound. Such was the man who travelled from Hooghly to Tâmbrapurny, who bewailed and denounced in unmeasured terms the imbecility of our young men, whose words flashed as lightning and cut as steel, who impressed all, communicated his enthusiasm to some, and lighted the spark of undying faith in a chosen few."

To many the Swami seemed the very embodiment of the culture of the Darsanas, the Agamas and the Yogas. He was saturated with the living consciousness not only of the Hindu spiritual experience, but also of the philosophical and scientific achievements of the West. One who was highly cultured, and became his disciple in these days, spoke of him thus:

" The vast range of his mental horizon perplexed and enraptured me. From the Rig Veda to Raghuvamsa, from the metaphysical flights of the Vedânta philosophy to modern Kant and Hegel, the whole range of ancient and modern literature and art and music and morals, from the sublimities of ancient Yoga to the intricacies of a modern laboratory—everything seemed clear to his field of vision. It was this which confounded me, made me his slave."

Another disciple writes:

" He frequently had to descend to the level of his questioners and to translate his soaring thoughts into their language. He would often anticipate several questions ahead and give answers that would satisfy the questioners at once. When asked how he so understood them, he would say with a smile that Sannyâsins were ' doctors of men,' and that they were able to diagnose their cases before they administered remedies to them.

"At times many men's thoughts were his. He would answer scores of questioners at one time and silence them all.

"Soft and forgiving as he was to those on whom his grace rested, one had to live in his presence as in the vicinity of a dangerous explosive. The moment a bad thought entered one's mind it would flash across his also. One could know it from a peculiar smile that lit his lips and from the words that would casually escape from his mouth in the course of conversation."

Already he had announced his intention of going to the West. He said about it to all those who knew him in Madras. And those who listened saw with him the imperative need of preaching the Dharma. And they understood the intention of the Swami to sail for the distant shores of the West. Not only did they understand his intention, they themselves intensified it. They went forth eager to raise subscriptions for the cause. He himself had had it long in mind to attend the Parliament of Religions, but he took no definite step in this matter, preferring to abide by the will of the Mother. And those who went forth to raise funds soon collected some five hundred rupees. But the Swami, when he saw the money, grew nervous. He said to himself, "Am I following my own will? Am I being carried away by enthusiasm? Or is there a deep meaning in all that I have thought and planned?" He prayed, "O Mother, show me Thy will! It is Thou who art the Doer. Let me be only Thy instrument." He, a Sannyâsin, inexperienced in the ways of the world, was about to sail for far distant lands, alone, unknown, to meet strange peoples and deliver to them a strange message! And so he said to the astonished disciples, "My boys, I am determined to force the Mother's will. She must prove that it is Her intention that I should go, for it is a step in the dark. If it be Her will, then money will come again of itself. Therefore, take this money and distribute it amongst the poor." His disciples obeyed him without a word, and the Swami felt as though a great burden had been taken off his shoulders.

He again settled down to the life of the Teacher, and prayed to the Mother and the Master in the solitude of his soul for guidance and direction. And in these days he meditated intensely. The monk with the prodigious intellect and the fire of patriotism became transformed into a simple child waiting for the Mother's call, knowing that it would come. His soul grew tense with determination to make the Mother speak Her will.

But while he was in this devotional state, many of those in Hyderabad who had heard of the Swami from their Madras friends, begged him to come on a brief visit. He readily consented, thinking that there must be a hidden purpose in this unexpected call. His host at Madras telegraphed to a friend, Babu Madhusudan Chatterjee, the Superintending Engineer of His Highness the Nizam, that the Swami was to arrive at Hyderabad on the 10th of February and be his guest. On the day previous, the Hindus of Hyderabad and Secunderabad had called a public meeting to arrange a fitting reception for the Swami. So when he arrived at Hyderabad he was surprised to find on the station platform five hundred people assembled to receive him, including the most distinguished members of the Court of Hyderabad, several of the nobility and many rich merchants, pleaders and Pandits, notable amongst whom were Raja Srinivâs Rao Bahadur, Maharaja Rambhâ Rao Bahadur, Pandit Rattan Lâl, Captain Raghunâth, Shams-ul-Ulema Syed Ali Bilgrami, Nawab Imad

Jung Bahadur, Nawab Dula Khan Bahadur, Nawab Imad Nawaz Jung Bahadur, Nawab Secunder Nawaz Jung Bahadur, Mr. H. Dorabjee, Mr. F. S. Mundon, Rai Hukum Chand, M.A., LL.D., Setts Chaturbhuj and Motilâl, bankers, and the host and his son, Babu Kâli Charan Chatterjee. Babu Kali Charan, who was known to the Swami in Calcutta, introduced every one to him. Flowers and garlands were heaped upon the monk. Writes an eye-witness as follows: We have never seen such crowds gathered before to receive a Swami! It was a magnificent reception.

On the morning of February 11, a committee of one hundred Hindu residents of Secunderabad approached him with offerings of sweets, milk and fruits, and asked him to deliver a lecture at the Mahaboob College in their city. The Swami consented, fixing the 13th as the date. Then he drove with Babu Kali Charan to the fort at Golconda of historic note and famous for its diamonds. On returning, the Swami found awaiting him a bearer from the Private Secretary to Nawab Bahadur Sir Khurshid Jah, Amiri-i-Kabir, K.C.S.I., the foremost nobleman of Hyderabad and the brother-in-law of His Highness the Nizam, requesting him to come to the palace for an interview on the following morning. At the appointed hour the Swami. accompanied by Babu Kali Charan, went to the palace, where he was received by an Aide-de-camp of the Nawab. Sir Khurshid Jah was noted for religious tolerance and was the first Mohammedan to visit all the Hindu places of pilgrimage from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. He received the Swami warmly.

For more than two hours the interview lasted, the Swami discussing the contents of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. The Nawab took exception to the idea of the Personal God as represented in

Hinduism, himself believing in the Impersonal Ideal. Then the Swami spoke to him of the evolution of the idea of God, and proved the necessity of the conception of Him as a Person, a pragmatic factor in human experience, the highest conception of human nature. He pointed out that every other religion but Hinduism depended on the life of some person who was its founder, while Vedântism was based upon eternal principles and not upon persons, and that it was on this that it based its claim of being the universal religion. Rising higher and higher in his intellectual flights, the Swami introduced to the mind of the Nawab the whole background of religious ideas as having arisen from the inmost depths of the human nature and out of the perception of the Truth. He said that all ideals were true, and that the different religious systems were but special paths for the attainment of these various ideals, which, when intensified, were certain to draw out the Divinity within man. Then, bringing the ideas of the Absolute and the Vedânta into the discussion, he stated that man was the greatest of all beings, for it was out of the human spiritualised intelligence that all the truths of the universe had been discovered, and that he transcended all limitations and was Divine. He then gave out his intention of going to the West to preach the gospel of the Universal, Eternal Religion. His eloquence deeply impressed the Nawab, who said, "Swamiji, I am ready to help you in your undertaking with one thousand rupees." But the Swami declined to accept the money at that time, saying that he would ask for it when he actually embarked on his mission.

On the morning of the 13th he met by appointment Sir Ashman Jah, K. C. S. I., the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, the Maharaja Norendra Krishna Bahadur, Peshkar of the State, and the Maharaja

Shew Raj Bahadur, and all these noblemen promised their support for his proposed propaganda in America. In the afternoon he delivered a lecture at the Mahaboob College on "My Mission to the West." The chair was occupied by Pandit Rattan Lal. Many Europeans attended this lecture, and more than one thousand persons were present. The Swami's command over the English language, his learning, his power of expression and his eloquence were a revelation to all. On the next day the well-known bankers of the Begum Bazar, headed by Sett Moti Lal, interviewed him, and they all promised to help him with his passage money. Some of the members of the Theosophical Society and of the Sanskrit Dharma Mandal Sabhâ also came. On February 15, the Swami received a telegram from Poona, signed by the leading citizens in the name of the Hindu societies of the city, urging him to come on a visit there. But the Swami replied that he could not come then, but that he would be very happy to go when he could. The next day he went to see the ruins of the Hindu temples, the famous tomb of Baba Saraf-ud-din, and also the palace of Sir Salar Jung.

It was in Hyderabad that he met a famous Yogi, gifted with psychic powers. He was a Brâhmin of learning and culture who had given himself up to the training of the faculties of the mind and had developed many subtle powers. When the Swami arrived he found the man sick of a high fever. The Yogi seeing a Sannyâsin before him asked him to sit near him, and regarding him by his signs to be a highly developed spiritual soul, begged him to put his hand on his head. On the Swami's doing so the fever left, and he sat up. When the Swami told him of the object of his visit he demonstrated some of his wonderful powers. The Swami pondered long over the phenomena he had witnessed, and finally came to the conclusion that they were of a subjective character, and that by the development of the faculties of the mind the greatest and most surprising phenomena could occur. Some of his reflections on this incident and allied subjects were embodied in a lecture he gave in California called, "The Powers of the Mind."

On February 17, the Swami left Hyderabad. More than one thousand persons came to the railway station to bid him farewell. "His pious simplicity, unfailing self-control and profound meditation," writes Babu Kali Charan, "made an indelible impression on the citizens of Hyderabad."

When the Swami returned from Hyderabad to Madras, he was accorded an ovation at the station by his numerous disciples. The Swami seemed more self-confident, for he had tested his oratorical powers before the assembly at the Mahaboob College, and felt that he was able to influence men, that he could sway vast assemblies as well as small gatherings. Indeed, he had told Mr. Mitra at Belgaum that a large audience draws out the powers of a speaker and makes him rise to the very apex of insight and self-expression. In Madras the Swami continued to gladden the hearts of his followers with religious discourses and conversations on an infinite variety of subjects. And each day brought new disciples and new devotees.

As the day passed, the Swami became more and more possessed with the idea of America. Sometimes his whole soul struggled with a feeling of uncertainty about his mission, for he felt that in America he would be greatly handicapped; at other times he would be thrilled with anticipation, delighted at the idea of extending the scope of his work, and eager for new experience. He had at intervals an intuition of the great opportunity and success that awaited him, and he would talk with his disciples about his mission to the peoples of the West. And those who gave money towards his voyage were actuated not only by personal devotion to him but also by the conviction that he was destined to accomplish great things. They knew nothing of Sri Ramakrishna's prophecies concerning the Swami's future greatness, for he never spoke of them. Says Mr. Vyasa Rao:

> "When the world discovered Vivekananda it discovered also Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, eight years after his passing away. People understood Sri Ramakrishna through the medium of his disciple, Vivekananda. . . . and Sri Ramakrishna was taken for granted on the words of a young Sannyâsin who was so strange in himself. . . . It was assuredly not because of Sri Ramakrishna that hopes were entertained of Swami Vivekananda ; they were hopes centred in Vivekananda from what the people of Madras had seen of him unknown to reputation as he then was."

During the months of March and April the disciples of the Swami in Madras took definite steps to raise subscriptions for his passage to America. In fact, some went even to Mysore, Ramnad and Hyderabad for the purpose. Naturally, they visited those whom the Swami had made his disciples, or who were his outspoken admirers. Those, in particular, who had organised themselves into a subscription committee, as it were, were headed by Mr. Alasingha Perumâl, a devoted follower of the Swami, who literally went begging from door to door. It was he and the young men under him who collected the major portion of the funds. They went for the most part to the middle classes, for the Swami had told them, "If it is the Mother's will that I go, then let me receive the money from the people! Because it is for the people of India that I am going to the West,—for the people and the poor!"

The Swami was still in a great tumult of emotion concerning the journey. It has been seen, when he was at Madras before his journey to Hyderabad, what steps he took to force the Mother Herself to tell him directly if it were Her will that he should go to the West. When he returned to Madras and found his disciples eager to collect funds and urging him to carry out his intention, he thought, "Well, their readiness is perhaps the first sign!" Then, for some reason, he seemed to pass again through a period of great uncertainty, in spite of being convinced of the necessity and the utility of it.

In this state of mind the Swami prayed to the Mother and to his Master for guidance. His hours of prayer were filled with a certain assurance, yet he demanded actual vision; he desired the direct command. Several days later, one night as he lay half-asleep the command came to him in a symbolic dream. The Swami saw the figure of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, walking from the seashore into the waters of the ocean, and beckoning him to follow! He awoke. A great peace and joy filled his whole being; his mind seemed to have been impressed with the authoritative word, "Go!" The vision sustained him. He thought it to be a direct command from On High. All his doubts and misgivings were dissipated and his nervousness left him.

But even as when he first set out upon the Parivrâjaka life he had sought the blessings of Sâradâ Devi, so now he yearned for her blessings on this longer journey. Accordingly he wrote to the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi, for her blessings, requesting her at the same time to be silent about his plans. The feelings of the Holy Mother when she received this news may well be imagined. For many, many months she had not heard from him who had been the most beloved disciple of the Master, and for whom she cherished a special affection. The maternal instinct of the Holy Mother prompted her to prevent his going to unknown distant lands; at the same time she recognised that it was the will of the Master, and she set her personal feelings aside and sent on her blessings together with loving counsel. When the Swami received this letter he was filled with joy. Now he felt sure of his mission. But just when all arrangements for sailing were made, Munshi Jagmohan Lal, the Private Secretary to the Maharaja of Khetri, appeared on the scene and stopped all plans for the time being.

About two years before, we saw the Swami at the Maharaja of Khetri's palace. It will be recalled how the Prince had prayed to him to bless him so that a son might be born to him. Now, a son was born, an heir to the ancient Raj of Khetri. And the Prince in his excitement and joy sent his Private Secretary to get the Swami at Khetri for the festivities. He arrived at Madras and saw the Swami at Mr. Bhattacharya's. The Swami was surprised to see him, and asked why he had come. When Jagmohan Lal explained, the Swami said, "Dear Jagmohan, I am making preparations to embark for America on the 31st of May, only a month hence! How can I go to see the Maharaja now?" But the messenger persisted, saying, "Swamiji, you must come to Khetri even if only for a day! Rajaji will be overwhelmed with disappointment if you fail to come! You need not trouble yourself about making any arrangement for your going to the West. The Maharaja himself will see to it. You simply must come with me!" The Swami at length consented.

On the way to Khetri the Swami stopped at Vapingana, Bombay and Jeypore. It was late evening when the Swami arrived at Khetri; and the palace was *en fete* and lit up resplendently. Indeed, the festivities had been going on for three or four days, and the whole city was beautifully decorated. Singing, dancing and music were going on on all sides. The Maharaja was at the time in his State barge surrounded by his State guests, some of whom were the Chiefs of Rajputana. When Jagmohan Lal presented himself with the Swami, the Maharaja rose from his seat and prostrated himself before his Guru. The Swami blessed him and taking him by the hand, raised him up. All present also rose to their feet and bowed before him. The musicians sang a song of welcome as he was led to a seat of honour. Then the Maharaja formally introduced him to the assembled guests, and made known to them how the Swami had blessed him that a son might be born to him, and told them of the Swami's decision to visit the West to preach the doctrines of the Sanâtana Dharma. At this the whole court cheered. Then the babe was brought in to be blessed by the Swami.

After a few days, the Swami informed the Prince that it was now time for him to be off to Bombay to make preparations for the voyage. The Prince and Jagmohan Lal accompanied the Swami as far as Jeypore, where an interesting incident occurred which proved to be a great eye-opener to the Swami. One evening the Maharaja was being entertained with music by a nautch-girl. The Swami was in his own tent when the music commenced. The Maharaja sent a message to the Swami asking him to come and join the party. The Swami sent word in return that as a Sannyâsin he could not come. The singer was deeply grieved when she heard this, and sang in reply, as it were, a song of the great Vaishnava saint, Surdâs. Through the still evening air, to the accompaniment of music, the girl's melodious voice ascended to the ears of the Swami,

"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!
Thy Name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness,
One piece of iron is in the Image in the Temple,
And another, the knife in the hand of the butcher,
But when they touch the philosopher's stone,
Both alike turn to gold,
So, Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!" etc.

The Swami was deeply touched. The woman and her song told him something he was forgetting, that all is Brahman, that the same Divinity is back of all beings, aye! even in this woman whom he had despised. And he came to the Hall of audience and joined the party. Speaking of this incident later, the Swami said: "Hearing the song I thought, 'Is this my Sannyâsa! I am a Sannyâsin, and yet I have in me the sense of distinction between myself and this woman!' That incident removed the scales from my eyes. Seeing that all are indeed the manifestation of the One, I could no longer condemn anybody."

The Swami left Jeypore for Bombay, accompanied by the Prince's Private Secretary, who had been instructed to pay the expenses of the Swami's journey and to provide him with everything necessary for his voyage to America. The Maharaja bade the Swami farewell with a heavy heart. It was at his court that the Swami had, at his request, assumed the name of Vivekananda. Before that the Swami had travelled under various names—Sachchidânanda, Vividishânanda, etc.

Alighting at the Abu Road station, the Swami spent the night in the house of a railway servant, who had been one of his kind hosts in the days of his wanderings. At the railway station, before resuming the journey, the Swami had rather an unpleasant experience with a European ticket-collector. A Bengali gentleman, an admirer of the Swami, was sitting with him in the compartment, when the man ordered him rudely out of the carriage, citing a railway regulation. The gentleman, who was also a railway employee, mildly protested and pointed out that there was no regulation to compel him to leave; this only enraged the man the more. Then the Swami himself intervened, which did not mend matters, for the man turned on him, saying sharply, "Tum Kâhe Bât Karteho?" which means, "Why dost thou meddle?" The Hindi word, "Tum" or "thou," one uses only with inferiors, while "Ap" is used with one's equals. At this, the Swami became indignant and said, "What do you mean by 'Tum?' Can you not behave properly? You are attending to first and second class passengers, and you do not know manners! Why do you not say 'Ap?'" The ticket-collector, seeing his mistake, said, "I am sorry. I do not know the language well. I only wanted this man. . . ." The Swami interrupted him with, "Just now you said you do not know Hindi well. Now I see that you do not even know your own language. This 'man' of whom you speak is a gentleman!" The ticket-collector feeling himself to be in the wrong left the compartment. Speaking of this incident to Jagmohan Lal, the Swami said, "You see what we need in our dealings with Europeans is self-respect. We do not deal with men according to their positions, and so they take advantage of us. We must keep our dignity before others. Unless we do that we expose ourselves to insult."

At Mount Abu Swami Turiyananda met him and accompanied him to Bombay. Of his meeting with the Swami at Abu Road station, Swami Turiyananda said later on: "I vividly remember some remarks made by Swamiji at that time. The exact words and accents, and the deep pathos with which they were uttered, still ring in my ears. He said, 'Haribhâi, I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion.' Then with an expression of deep sorrow in his countenance and an intense emotion shaking his body, he placed his hand on his heart and added, 'But my heart has expanded very much, and I have learnt to feel. Believe me I feel intensely indeed.' His voice was choked with feeling; he could say no more. For a time, profound silence reigned, and tears rolled down his cheeks." In telling of this incident Swami Turiyananda was also overcome. He sat silent for a while, his eyelids heavy with tears. With a deep sigh he said: "Can you imagine what passed through my mind on hearing the Swami speak thus? 'Are not these,' I thought, 'the very words and feelings of Buddha?' . . . I could clearly perceive that the sufferings of humanity were pulsating in the heart of Swamiji—his heart was a huge cauldron in which the sufferings of mankind were being made into a healing balm."

We shall make a little digression here to relate another incident indicative of the Swami's loving heart as told by Swami Turiyananda after the Swami's return from America. It took place at Balaram Bose's home at Baghbazar, Calcutta, where the Swami was staying for a time. Swami Turiyananda said, "I came to see Swamiji and found him walking alone on the verandah lost in such deep thought that he did not perceive my arrival. I kept quiet, lest I should interrupt his reverie. After some time, Swamiji with tears rolling down his cheeks began to hum a well-known song of Mirâbâi. Then with his face in his hands and leaning on the railings he sang in anguished tones, 'Oh, nobody understands my sorrow! nobody understands my sorrow!' The sad strains and Swamiji's dejection seemed to affect even the objects around him! The whole atmosphere vibrated with the sad melody: 'No one but the sufferer knows the pangs of sorrow.' His voice pierced my heart like an arrow, moving me to tears. Not knowing the cause of Swamiji's sorrow I was very uneasy. But it soon flashed upon me that it was a tremendous universal sympathy with the suffering and oppressed that was the cause of his mood."

To return to our story, the Swami and his companion went on to Bombay, where they were met by Alasingha Perumal, who had come all the way from Madras to bid farewell to the Swami. The Maharaja of Khetri had instructed Jagmohan Lal to make every possible arrangement for the Swami's comfort. The Swami was therefore outfitted properly, presented with a handsome purse and a first class ticket on the Peninsular and Orient Company's steamer, "Peninsular." The few intervening days were passed in silent meditation, in calling on friends and in religious discourses.

But often his mind reverted to the far-off monastery in Baranagore. He wondered how it and the Gurubhâis were faring. He hoped that all was well. They did not know definitely where he was. But so great were their hope and faith in him, that when they first heard of a Hindu Monk's great triumph in America they were almost certain that Swami Vivekananda was no other than he who was their own beloved Naren.

Finally the day arrived May 31, 1893. The ship, the bidding of farewells, the many anxieties of foreign travel, to which the Swami as a Sannyâsin was unaccustomed,—all these things were new to him. Then, too, at the insistence of his friends he had been made to dress himself in a robe of ochre silk and a turban of the same material. Indeed, he looked like a prince. But his heart was consumed by various emotions. Jagmohan Lal and Alasingha Perumal accompanied him up the gangway and remained until the very last moment when the great gongs of the ship struck. When finally the moment of departure came, there were tears in their eyes. They prostrated themselves at his feet in final salutation and left the ship, which soon after started on its course. Mr. Chhabildas who was the kind host of the Swami at Bombay sailed by the same boat.

The Swami stood on the deck gazing towards the land until it faded out of sight, constantly sending his benedictions to those who loved him and whom he loved so tenderly. His eyes were filled with tears; his heart was overwhelmed with emotion. He thought of the Master, of the Holy Mother, and of his Gurubhâis. He thought of INDIA and her culture, of her greatness and her sufferings, of the Rishis and of the Dharma. And his heart seemed to burst with love for his native land. Slowly he was encompassed by the black waters of the ocean, and he murmured under his breath, "Verily, from the Land of Renunciation I go to the Land of Enjoyment!" But it was to be no enjoyment for him. It was to be work, work, strenuous, terrible work and struggle, and much difficulty and asceticism. That work was to break his body to pieces; he was not to know any rest. He was to have but nine years more of life, and that in service and often in sorrow. He breathed the sacred name of his Master and that of the Divine Mother of the Universe almost audibly. Yes, he, the great Seer of the Vedic Wisdom, was always and everywhere the Child of the Mother, and the Disciple of his Master! The ship moved on its way southward to Ceylon; and the Swami was alone with his thoughts and the vastness of the sea.

Before taking leave of the Swami on his way to the West for the purpose of representing India and its spiritual ideals and culture at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago, it would be appropriate to conclude the chapter with the words of a well-known writer in order to show how well the Swami had fitted himself for his glorious mission:

"During his travels, by turns he realised the essence of Buddhism and Jainism, the spirit of Râmânanda and Dayânanda. He had become a profound student of Tulsidâs and Nischaldâs. He had learned all about the saints of the Mahârâshtra and the Alwârs and Nayanârs of Southern India. From the Paramahamsa Parivrâjakâchârya to the poor Bhangi Mehtar disciple of Lâlguru he had learnt not only their hopes and ideals, but their memories as well. To his clear vision the Moghul supremacy was but an interregnum in the continuity of Indian national life. Akbar was Hindu in breadth of vision and boldness of synthesis. Was not the Taj, to his mind, a Sakuntalâ in marble? 'The songs of Guru Nânak alternated with those of Meerâbâi and Tânsen on his lips. The stories of Prithvi Râj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Pratâp Singh, Siva and Umâ, Râdha and Krishna, Sitâ-Râm and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was the burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.' He held in his hands all that was fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life. There was a fire in his breast, which entered into him with the comprehension of essential truths, the result of spiritual illumination. His great mind saw a connection where others saw only isolated facts; his mind pierced the soul of things and presented facts in their real order. His was the most universal mind, with a perfect practical culture. What better equipment could one have who was to represent before the Parliament of Religions, India in its entirety—Vedic and Vedântic, Buddhistic and Jain, Saivic and Vaishnavic and even Mohammedan? Who else could be better fitted for this task than this disciple of one who was in himself a Parliament of Religions, in a true sense?"

XX

ON THE WAY TO AND EARLY DAYS IN AMERICA

The Swami accustomed himself gradually to the life on board the ship. At first he was much worried with having to take care of the many things which his voyage made necessary. This proved to be one of his greatest crosses. He, the Parivrâjaka, whose sole belonging had been in former times a Kamandalu, was now burdened with a tourist's outfit of trunks, valises and a wardrobe! How mysterious is the Providence that regulates the destiny of him who has given himself over at the Feet of the Lord! Aside from this the Swami enjoyed his various novel experiences. His rich imaginative nature saw beauty, in a thousand forms, in the swelling and falling of the waters, in every gust of wind, in every cloud. The mighty expanse of water, the invigorating air, the care-free atmosphere and the courtesy of all aboard, reconciled the Swami to his new surroundings.

His commanding presence, his courtly manner, his intelligent face, his manly bearing,—made him popular with his fellow-passengers. They admired the orange-robed Oriental with luminous countenance and tiger-like courage. Often the Captain, when at leisure, would join the Swami in his solitary walks. He showed him the entire ship, explaining to him the mechanism of the engines. The Swami soon accommodated himself to the strange food, strange environment and the strange people; and by watching others he acquainted himself with the manners and customs of the Europeans.

It was not long before the steamer reached Colombo where a halt for almost a whole day was made. The Swami made use of the opportunity to visit the city. He drove through the streets, visited a temple rich with Buddhistic imagery, and was fascinated at seeing the image in it, which was a very gigantic image of the Lord Buddha, in a reclining posture, entering Nirvâna. The next stop was Penang, a strip of land along the sea in the body of the Malay Peninsula. The Swami learned that the Malays were Mohammedans, that the place had been infested in the olden days with pirates. "But now," writes the Swami, "the leviathan guns of modern turreted battleships have forced the Malays to look about for more peaceful pursuits." On his way from Penang to Singapore, he had glimpses of Sumatra, with its high mountains, and the Captain pointed out to him several favourite haunts of pirates in days gone by. The Swami was as happy as a child at seeing new and strange lands. The next halting-place was Singapore, the capital of the Straits Settlements, where he went to see the Botanical Garden with its beautiful collection of palms, and the museum.

The next port was Hongkong, giving the first glimpse of China. The name conjured up to the Swami the land of dreams and of romance; but he found that there were no greater commercial people than the Chinese. He was interested to see the great rush of crafts that swept in and about the great steamer, and was amused by the .way their owners implored the travellers in various dialects and in broken English to come to shore in their boats. It was a swarming and restless life. In a humorous vein, the Swami writes in his letter from Yokohama:

" These boats with two helms are rather peculiar. The boatman lives in the boat with his family. Almost always the wife is at the helms, managing one with her hands and the other with one of her feet. And in ninety per cent. of cases you find a baby tied to her back, with the hands and feet of the little Chin left free. It is a quaint sight to see the little John Chinaman dangling very quietly from his mother's back whilst she is now setting with might and main, now pushing heavy loads, or jumping with wonderful agility from boat to boat. And there is such a rush of boats and steam launches coming in and going out. Baby John is every moment in danger of having his little head pulverised, pigtail and all ; but he does not care a fig. This busy life seems to have no charm for him, and he is quite content to learn the anatomy of a bit of rice-cake given to him from time to time by the madly busy mother. The Chinese child is quite a philosopher and calmly goes to work at an age when your Indian boy can hardly crawl on all fours. He has learned the philosophy of necessity too well. Their extreme poverty is one of the causes why the Chinese and the Indians have remained in a state of mummified civilisation. To an ordinary Hindu or Chinese, everyday necessity is too hideous to allow him to think of anything else."

The halt of three days at Hongkong gave the passengers an opportunity to visit Canton, eighty miles up the Si Kiang river. The Swami's impressions are best given in his own words:

" What a scene of bustle and life! What an immense number of boats almost covering the waters! And not only those that are carrying on the trade, but hundreds of others which serve as houses to live in. And quite a lot of them so nice and big! In fact, they are big houses two or three stories high, with verandahs running round and streets between and all floating!

" . . . Around us on both sides of the river for miles and miles is the big city—a wilderness of human beings, pushing, struggling, surging, roaring."

Canton proved to be a revelation to the Swami. He learned that the high-caste Chinese lady can never be seen, and that there is as strict a Zenana in China as is in vogue amongst the Hindus of Northern India.

He found that even many of the women of the labouring classes had "feet smaller than those of our youngest child, and of course they cannot be said to walk, but hobble." In Canton, the Swâmi visited several of the more important temples, the very largest of which was dedicated to the memory of the first Buddhist Emperor and the first five hundred disciples of Buddha. Entering the temple he found an imposing figure of Lord Buddha in the central position, and beneath him was the image of the Emperor in reverent and meditative attitude. About him grouped the images of the five hundred disciples of the Lord. He studied the ancient Buddhist sculpture and wondered at the artistry of these wooden images. He found many points of similarity between Buddhist and Indian temples! He observed as well their dissimilarities and delighted in their originality.

But as a monk his earnest desire was to see a Chinese monastery. Unfortunately, these monasteries were on grounds forbidden to foreigners. What could be done? He asked the interpreter, only to be told that it was impossible. But this served only to intensify his desire. He must see a Chinese monastery! He said to the interpreter, "Suppose a foreigner goes there, what then?" only to receive the reply, "Why, sir, they are sure to maltreat him!" The Swami thought that the monks would not molest him if they knew him to be a Hindu Sâdhu. He persisted and finally induced the interpreter and his fellow passengers to tread the "forbidden ground," saying laughingly, "Come, let us see if they will kill us!" But they had not gone far when the interpreter cried out, "Away! Away! Gentlemen! They are coming, and they are infuriated!" Some two or three men with clubs in their hands were seen approaching rapidly. Frightened at their menacing appearance all but himself and the interpreter took to their heels. When even the latter evinced a desire to flee the Swami seized him by the arm and said with a smile, "My good man, you must not run away before you tell me what the Chinese call an Indian Yogi in their language." Having been told this, the Swami called out to the men in a loud voice that he was an Indian Yogi. And lo, the word Yogi acted like magic! The expression of the angry men changed to that of deep reverence and they fell at his feet. They arose and stretched out their joined palms in most respectful salutation; and then said something in a loud voice, of which one word the Swami understood to be "Kabatch." He thought it was undoubtedly the Indian word, meaning amulet. But to be sure of what they meant, he shouted to the interpreter, who stood at a safe distance, confounded at these strange developments, as well he might be, for never in all his experience had he witnessed such a spectacle as this. For an explanation the man said, "Sir, they want amulets to ward off evil spirits and unholy influences. They desire your protection." The Swami was taken aback for a moment. He did not believe in charms. Suddenly he took a sheet of paper from his pocket, divided it into several pieces, and wrote on all the word "Om" in Sanskrit, the most holy word of the Vedas and the symbol of the highest transcendent truth. He gave them the bits of paper, and the men, touching them to their heads led him into the monastery.

In the more isolated portions of the building he was shown many Sanskrit manuscripts written, strange to say, in old Bengali characters. And then it occurred to him, that when he had visited the temple dedicated to the First Buddhist Emperor he had been struck with the unmistakable resemblance of the faces of the five hundred followers of the Lord to those of the Bengalees. These evidences, as also his past study of Chinese Buddhism, convinced him that Bengal and China had at one time been in close communication, that there must have been a great influx of Bengali Bhikshus in China, who brought to that distant country the gospel of the Blessed One, and that Indian thought had dominated Chinese civilisation in a remarkable way.

At Nagasaki in Japan, the Swami was greatly impressed with everything he saw. In his first letter to his Madras disciples he writes:

> "The Japanese are one of the cleanliest peoples on earth. Everything is neat and tidy. The streets are nearly all broad, straight and regularly paved. Their little houses are cage-like, and their pine-covered evergreen little hills form the background of almost every town and village. The short-statured, fair-skinned, quaintly-dressed Japs, their movements, attitudes, gestures, everything is picturesque. Japan is the land of the picturesque! Almost every house has a garden at the back, very nicely laid out according to Japanese fashion with small shrubs, grass-plots, small artificial waters and small stone bridges."

From Nagasaki the ship sailed on to Kobe. Here the Swami disembarked, and took the land route to Yokohama in order to see the interior of Japan, planning to catch the steamer again at Yokohama. He visited three of the larger cities, Osaka, the great manufacturing town, Kioto, the former capital, and Tokio, the present capital. During his short sojourn in Japan he penetrated into the essential elements of its national life and acquainted himself with the customs and the culture of the people. But what struck him most was the rage for modern progress in every department of knowledge and in every community. He writes:

> "The Japanese seem to be fully awakened to the necessities of the present times. They have now a thoroughly

organised army equipped with guns, which one of their own officers has invented, and which is said to be second to none. Then, they are continually increasing their navy. I have seen a tunnel nearly a mile long bored by a Japanese engineer.

"The match factories are simply a sight to see, and they are bent upon making everything they want in their own country. There is a Japanese line plying between China and Japan, which shortly intends running between Bombay and Yokohama."

In all these cities he made a point of seeing the important temples and studying the rituals and ceremonies observed in them. To his amazement he found that here also the temples were inscribed with Sanskrit Mantras in old Bengali characters, (though only a few of the ecclesiastics knew Sanskrit), and that the modern spirit had penetrated even to the priesthood. He was especially delighted to discover that, "To the Japanese, India is still the dreamland of everything high and good."

In his letter from Yokohama to the group of disciples in Madras, one finds the Swami vigorously denouncing the evils of his own country, trying to arouse it from the state of inertia into which it had sunk through priestcraft and social tyranny. He had done that often before, but once out of the land he gained a much clearer perspective and found that the system which disregarded the masses and trampled them under foot, was the root of all India's evils. He did not rant against the Brahmanical culture. Indeed, he revered it. What he desired was that Indians should "Come out and be men!" He wrote in that letter: "India wants the sacrifice of at least a thousand of her young men,—men, mind and not brutes. . . . How many men, unselfish, thorough-going men, is Madras ready now to supply, to struggle unto death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for the poor—bread for their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large . . . who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers?" This intense note of criticism, enthusiasm and inspiration which came from Yokohama stirred the hearts of the disciples of the Swami in Madras. The letter shows how his heart was always Indian, and the outburst is that of a patriot who travelling abroad finds in other nations a more modern, organised and self-reliant public life and desires it for his native land.

From Yokohama the ship sailed on to Vancouver—from the Old World to the New! As the ship drew near to the port of Vancouver in British Columbia the Swami saw from a distance the land of his hopes. For want of warm clothing he had suffered much on board the ship from cold, for, though he was provided with a handsome wardrobe, it did not occur to him or to his disciples that this summer voyage by the Northern Pacific would be cold. From Vancouver he went by train to Chicago through Canada. Through city after city the train carried him, until finally on the third day he found himself, bewildered as a child, in the mazes of the city of Chicago. Being unused to handling money and to foreign travel, the Swami had been imposed upon at every stage of his journey.

What the state of the Swami's mind was when he reached Chicago can well be imagined. Burdened with unaccustomed possessions, not knowing where to go, conspicuous because of his strange attire, annoyed by the lads who ran after him in amusement, weary and confused by exorbitant charges of the porters, bewildered by the crowds, chiefly visitors to and from the World's Fair, he sought a hotel. When the porters had brought his luggage and he was at last alone and free from interruptions he sat down amidst his trunks and satchels and tried to calm his mind.

On the following day he set out to visit the World's Fair. He was struck speechless with amazement at the wonders he saw. Here all the latest products of the inventive and artistic mind of the entire world had been brought to a focus, as it were, for examination and admiration. He visited the various exhibition palaces, marvelling at the vast machinery and at the arts and products of the land, but above all at the tremendous energy, and practical acumen of the human mind as manifested by the exhibits. But amongst the streams of people he felt desperately alone, for in all that vast assembly, aye, in the whole continent of North America he had not one friend. He returned to his hotel in the evening quite exhausted. Soon the Swami became acquainted with people here and there who approached him, desiring to know who he was. He continued to frequent the Fair, absorbing every aspect of learning with which he was brought into contact. The splendour of it all, its hugeness, its perfect organisation, made him wonder. He was a keen observer; his eyes were eager to take in every object of value in the Exhibition.

While he was on the Fair grounds one day a funny incident occurred, which is best narrated in the Swami's own words. In a letter written shortly after his leaving Chicago he writes:

> "The Raja of K— was here and he was being lionised by some portion of Chicago society. I once met the Raja in the Fair grounds, but he was too big to speak with a poor Fakir. There was an eccentric Mahratta Brâhmin selling nail-made pictures in the Fair, dressed in a Dhooti. This fellow told the reporters all sorts of things against the Raja, that he was a man of low caste, that those Rajas were

nothing but slaves, and that they generally led immoral lives, etc., etc. And these truthful (?) editors, for which America is famous, wanted to give the boy's stories some weight ; and so the next day they wrote huge columns in their papers, giving an elaborate description of 'a man of wisdom'. from India, meaning me,—extolling me to the skies, and putting all sorts of words in my mouth, which I never even dreamt of, and ascribing to me all those remarks made by the Mahratta Brâhmin about the Raja of K——! And it was such a good brushing, that Chicago society gave up the Raja in hot haste. . . . These newspaper editors made capital out of me to give my countryman a brushing. That shows, however, that in this country intellect carries more weight than all the pomp of money and title."

Yes,—somehow the reporters had found the Swami out. Certainly such a conspicuous figure as the Swami was not to escape the notice of news-devouring reporters. And so they learned much about him from the manager of the hotel where he was stopping, whilst others sought him out upon the Fair grounds, besieging him with questions. Gradually the Swami became accustomed to his strange surroundings which interested him. But there were moments when he felt depressed. Those whom he had met were only casual acquaintances. He had made no friendships; but in his heart, beyond both the excitement and the depression of his experiences, he somehow felt that he had a call from Above and that the Lord would lead and guide him. After all, there was no doubt as to the rightness of the step that he had taken in leaving India.

But his hopes received a rude shock when, after the first few days in Chicago, he betook himself to the Information Bureau of the Exposition in order to learn details concerning the Parliament. He entered its office and made inquiries as to when the great convention was to open. To his dismay he learned that it would not commence until after the first week of September, and that no one would be admitted as a delegate without proper references, and that even the time for being so admitted had gone by. This almost broke the Swami's spirit. He found that he had left India much too early, as it was then only the middle of July; and to have come all the way from India and to have to wait all that length of time—for nothing! It was too much. He also discovered that he should have come as a representative of some recognised organisation. He wondered why he had been so foolish as to have listened to those sentimental schoolboys of Madras, who were ignorant of the necessary steps to be taken in order to become a delegate. "To their unbounded faith it never occurred," writes Sister Nivedita, "that they (the disciples) were demanding what was, humanly speaking, impossible. They thought that Vivekananda had only to appear and he would be given his chance. The Swami himself was as simple in the ways of the world as these his disciples, and when he was once sure that he was divinely called to make the attempt, he could see no difficulties in the way. Nothing could have been more typical of the unorganisedness of Hinduism itself than this going forth of its representative unannounced, and without formal credentials, to enter the strongly-guarded doors of the world's wealth and power."

Then, too, his purse was gradually being emptied. The hotel charges were enormous; he found that in America money was spent like water. Having no idea of the value of money, he was cheated right and left wherever he went. A great depression came over him and he feared that he might have to telegraph to his Madras disciples for more money wherewith to return to India or to enable him to remain. At all events, he was determined not to give up easily. He was determined to make every effort to succeed in America; and if he failed there to try in England; should failure be his in England too, he could go back to India and wait for further commands from On High. However, one of his Madras friends wrote to some acquaintances in Chicago about the Swami and he was not forced to the extreme measure of calling for help. Thus was begun a friendship which lasted as long as the Swami lived. All the members of the family learned to love him dearly, to appreciate his brilliant gifts, and to admire the purity and simplicity of his character, to which they often bore willing and loving testimony.

The Swami was told that Boston was much less expensive than Chicago. So thinking it advisable he left Chicago for Boston. Mysterious are the ways of the Lord! The Swami, who had been helped in a score of wonderful ways as the Parivrâjaka, was also helped here. Travelling with him in the same carriage was an elderly lady from a village near Boston, who was attracted by his noble personality. She approached the Swami and entered into conversation with him. She was more than interested to know that he was an Indian monk and had come to America to preach the great truths of the Vedânta. She said, "Well, Swami, I invite you to come to my home and live there. Perhaps something will turn up in your favour!" He readily consented, and accordingly found himself lodged in the beautiful house of his hostess, called "Breezy Meadows," in Metcalf, Mass. on the day following his departure from Chicago. The lady was evidently a woman of means. The Swami had an advantage in living with her, in saving for some time his expenditure of £1 per day, and she had the advantage of inviting her friends over there, and showing them a curio from

India! The Swami, however, found much difficulty in adjusting himself to his new environments. He was hooted in the streets on account of his dress; and many of those who came to see him at the invitation of his hostess, plied him with all sorts of queer and annoying questions, thinking him "a pagan." However, he patiently bore with all these trials, knowing that nothing worth while was ever accomplished without suffering and sacrifice.

Here he met the Lady Superintendent of the women's prison, who had come to see him at the wish of his hostess. She invited him to visit the prison. The Swami writes thus of his thoughts and impressions of the visit to a disciple:

" They do not call it prison but reformatory here. It is the grandest thing I have seen in America. How the inmates are benevolently treated; how they are reformed, and sent back as useful members of society; how grand, how beautiful, you must see to believe it! And, oh, my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up. . . . They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery. . . . Ah, tyrants! you do not know that the obverse is tyranny and the reverse, slavery. . . .

" The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of doctrines Pâramârthika and Vyavahârika.

" . . . Gird up your loins, my boys. . . . I am called by the Lord for this. I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures, I have seen the nearest and the dearest die almost of starvation,—I have been ridiculed, distrusted, and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. . . .

" . . . The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. . . . Feel for the miserable and look up for help —it *shall come*. I have travelled for twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land, seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. . . .

" . . . Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. Hundreds will fall in the struggle—hundreds will be ready to take it up. . . . Faith—sympathy, fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing; death is nothing—hunger nothing, cold nothing. Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls—forward—onward! Thus and thus we shall go on, brethren. One falls and another takes up the work."

Indeed, the Swami found himself beset with all sorts of difficulties. He had arrived in America when most people of intellect and position were away for the summer. Winter was coming on, and he had no warm clothing. His Hindu dress was so conspicuous that his hostess advised him to dress in American fashion. A good suit would cost at least one hundred dollars, which would leave very little margin for living expenses. This uncertainty was a great strain upon him. Many times he did not know which way to turn; and yet he never lost faith! He wrote in the letter quoted above: "I am here amongst the children of the Son of Mary, and the Lord Jesus will help me." He saw that the more advanced visitors came because of his love for the Prophet of Nazareth and through that love were able to understand the broadness of Hinduism. \He was invited to speak at a large Women's Club, the members of which were interested in the heroic Ramâbâi. Before this lecture he had to purchase American clothes; his yellow robes and turban were kept for lecturing purposes only. His lecture at the Club was a success, and many persons became interested in him and his work.

Slowly the way was opening up for him. Distinguished persons called on him, amongst them, J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek in the Harvard University, with whom he discussed all manner of subjects for four hours. The Swami had given up all hope of speaking at the Parliament of Religions, but wonderful are the ways of the Lord! Professor Wright became so deeply impressed with his rare ability that he insisted that he should represent Hinduism in the Parliament, saying, "This is the only way you can be introduced to the nation at large." The Swami explained his difficulties and said that he had no credentials. Professor Wright who recognised his genius said, "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its right to shine!" He then assured the Swami that he would take it upon himself to see that he should have a place in the Parliament as a delegate representing Hinduism. He was acquainted with numerous persons of position and distinction in connection with the Parliament and wrote at once to his friend, the Chairman of the Committee on the selection of delegates, stating, "Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together." Knowing that the Swami had not enough money he kindly presented him with a ticket to Chicago, and also gave him letters of introduction to the Committee which had in charge the matters of housing and providing for the Oriental delegates. This was, indeed, a godsend! The Swami rejoiced at this literal manifestation of Divine Providence. Yes, the purpose for which he had come so many, many miles was about to be fulfilled in an unforeseen way. It so happened that on his journey to Chicago, joyous in spirit because the Lord had cleared away the obstacles before him and had given him the means and ways wherewith to present his message to the peoples of the West, he met a merchant who promised to direct him to his proper destination. But at the Chicago Station the merchant was in such a hurry that he forgot to instruct the Swami how to reach that part of the great city where Dr. Barrows had his office, and the Swami, to his dismay, found that he had lost the address! He made inquiries of passers-by, but it being the north-east side of the city where mostly Germans lived, they could not understand him. Night was coming on. He could not even make any one understand that he wanted to learn at least the whereabouts of a hotel. He was lost and knew not what to do. At length, he lay down to sleep in a huge empty box in the railroad freight-yards, and trusting to the guidance of the Lord he soon freed himself of all anxieties and fell asleep. On the morrow he was to shake America with his address at the Parliament; but now, so destiny decided, he should lie like some outcast, unknown, unaided and despised,—or perhaps, more truly speaking, like some Sannyâsin in his land, sleeping where the evening found him. Morning came; he arose and "smelling fresh water," as he said, he followed the scent and found himself in a short time on the most fashionable residential drive in the metropolis, the Lake Shore Drive, where millionaires and merchant-princes dwelt. He was extremely hungry and like the true Sannyâsin as he was, he commenced begging from house to house, asking for food and to be directed to the quarters of the Parliament Committee. Because of soiled clothes and travel-worn appearance, he was rudely treated at some houses; at others, he was insulted by the servants, and the doors slammed in his face. His heart sank; he knew nothing of city directories or telephones, so he could not seek rescue in that way. On and on he went. At length exhausted he sat down quietly upon the roadside, determined to abide by the Will of the Most High. At this juncture, the door of a fashionable residence opposite to him opened and a regal looking woman descended and accosted him in a soft voice in accents of culture and refinement, "Sir, are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions?" The Swami told her his difficulties. Immediately she invited him into her house and gave orders to her servants that he should be taken to a room and attended to in every way. She promised the Swami that after he had his breakfast she herself would accompany him to the offices of the Parliament of Religions. The Swami was grateful beyond words. "What a romantic deliverance! How strange the ways of the Lord!" His deliverer was Mrs. George W. Hale; she and her husband and children became his warmest friends.

A new spirit took possession of him. He was convinced beyond doubt that the Lord was with him, and in the spirit of a prophet he awaited the coming of events. With Mrs. Hale he called on the officers of the Parliament, gave his credentials, was gladly accepted as a delegate and found himself lodged with the other Oriental delegates to the Parliament. He felt with the passing of each moment that the Parliament of Religions would be the great test, the crucial experience for him. The day glided by in prayer, in meditation and in earnest longing that he might be made the true instrument of the Lord, the true spokesman of Hinduism, the true bearer of his Master's Message. He made acquaintance with many distinguished personages who were to attend the Parliament. In the grand circle of ecclesiastics that came and went in and about Chicago he moved as one lost in rapture and in prayer, hoping, praying, trusting. He had no personal feeling in the matter, save such as were related to the carrying out of the mission entrusted to him by his Master and perceived by him as command from On High.

XXI

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

The World's Parliament of Religions, which was held in the City of Chicago in September, 1893, was undoubtedly one of the greatest events in the history of the world marking an era in the history of religions, especially of Hinduism. Its full significance can be cognised only with the lapse of time. From all parts of the world delegates came, representing every form of organised religious belief. It was not only a Parliament of Religions; it was a parliament of humanity. If it had done nothing else than to make the whole body of human society aware by contrast of its "Unity in Diversity" and "Diversity in Unity" of the religious outlook, it would still have been unequalled among the world's conventions in character and importance. It unified the religious vision of humanity, which was the motive of the unprejudiced workers who made possible this ensemble of religious ideas and creeds. But it did far more than that. It roused a wave of new thought in the Western world, causing it to be conscious of the East, and its contrasting thought. In the language of the Hon. Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions:

> "One of its chief advantages has been in the great lesson which it has taught the Christian World, especially to the people of the United States, namely, that there are other religions more venerable than Christianity, which surpass it in philosophical depth, in spiritual intensity, in independent vigour of thought, and in breadth and sincerity of human sympathy, while not yielding to it a single hair's breadth in

ethical beauty and efficiency. Eight great non-Christian religious groups were represented in its deliberations—Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Mohammedanism and Mazdaism."

Some of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries in America had preached the necessity and the advantages of such a Parliament for some time, and when the Chicago World's Fair was organised it seemed to be the proper medium and opportunity. News of the fact that the Parliament was to be held was heralded broadcast to all parts of the globe. Committees of various characters were formed to organise it on a proper basis, and invitations were sent out to the heads or to the executive bodies of all acknowledged religious organisations the world over. Stipulations were made and instructions given;, and the process of sending delegates mapped out. Every religious creed was to send its own delegate or delegates as the case might be, and reception committees were to receive them on their arrival in Chicago. There were many necessary formalities to be observed in order to systematise the movement. Unfortunately, the group of disciples who had sent the Swami as a representative of Hinduism to the Parliament were unaware of these. They had simply seen the worth of the man and his ideas; and they had felt sure that he could introduce himself, as, in one sense, he did.

/If one could visualise the Parliament of Religions he would see a great concourse of some of the most distinguished personages of the world; a great mass of humanity, varying from seven to ten thousand in number marching in almost military formation to their seats and joining the sessions of the Parliament. Many of the greatest philosophers of the world were in daily attendance. More than one thousand papers were read by the different delegates. This gives some impression of the vastness of the undertaking and also of its vast importance. In connection with the Parliament, there were sections, one of which was the Scientific Section, which we mention in particular because the Swami spoke several times before it. The Hon. Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, who presided over it, became a great friend of the Swami and an ardent advocate of Hinduism.

A noted American writer, speaking of the Parliament of Religions and of Swami Vivekananda, says:

> " Prior to the Convention of the Parliament of Religions, adjunct to the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, which was convened in Chicago, little was known of Vivekananda in this country. On that auspicious occasion, however, he appeared in all his magnificent grandeur. It was on Monday, September 11th, at 10 A.M. when the opening address was delivered at the Art Institute, Chicago, by Dr. Barrows, from whence the following few words,—' Since faith in a Divine Power to whom men believe they owe service and worship has been like the sun, a life-giving and fructifying potency in man's intellectual and moral development ; since religion lies back of Hindu literature with its marvellous and mystic developments of European arts, it did not appear that religion any more than education, art, or electricity should be excluded from the Columbian Exposition.'
>
> " On that memorable Monday morning there sat upon the platform of the great Hall of Columbus representatives of the religious hopes and beliefs of twelve hundred millions of the human race. It was indeed impressive. In the centre sat Cardinal Gibbons, highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church on the Western Continent. He was seated upon a Chair of State and opened the meeting with prayer. On the right and left of him were gathered the Oriental delegates, whose brilliant attire vied with his own scarlet robes in brilliancy. Conspicuous among the followers of Brahma, Buddha and Mohammed was an eloquent monk from India, Vivekananda by name. He was clad in gorgeous red apparel and wore a large yellow turban, his remarkably fine features and

bronze complexion standing out prominently in the great throng. Beside him sat Nagarkar of the Brahmo Samaj, representative of the Hindu Theists ; next was Dharmapala, Ceylon's Buddhist representative ; next came Mazoomdar, leader of the Theists in India. Amongst the world's choicest divines these and many more, whose names would be more or less familiar, must be left out for want of space. This will suffice to show the setting with which our subject was surrounded. 'In contact with the learned minds of India we have inspired a new reverence for the Orient.' In numerical order Vivekananda's position was number thirty-one."

The Swami himself describes to a disciple the opening of the Parliament and his own state of mind in replying to the address of welcome offered to the delegates, in the following words:

"On the morning of the opening of the Parliament, we all assembled in a building called the Art Palace, where one huge and other small temporary halls were erected for the sittings of the Parliament. Men from all nations were there. (From India were Mazoomdar of the Brâhmo Samâj and Nagarkâr of Bombay, Mr. Gândhi representing the Jains, and Mr. Chakravarti representing Theosophy with Mrs. Annie Besant.) Of these men, Mazoomdar and I were of course old friends, and Chakravarti knew me by name. There was a grand procession, and we were all marshalled on to the platform. Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations on the earth. And I who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage!! It was opened in great form with music and ceremony and speeches ; then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke. Of course my heart was fluttering and my tongue nearly dried up ; I was so nervous, and could not venture to speak in the morning. Mazoomdar made a nice speech—Chakravarti a nicer one, and they were much applauded. They were all prepared and came with ready-made speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Saraswati and stepped up, and Dr. Barrows introduced me. I made a short speech . . . and when it was finished, I sat down almost exhausted with emotion."

Indeed, that sea of faces might have given even a practised orator stage-fright. To speak before such a distinguished, critical and highly intellectual audience required intense self-confidence. The Swami had seen the imposing procession, the huge assembly, the keen, eager faces of the masses, the shrewd, authoritative and dignified countenances of the Princes of the Christian churches, who sat on the platform. He was, as it were, lost in amazement by the splendour of it all. What had he, the unsophisticated Parivrâjaka, the simple Indian Sâdhu in common with this grand function and these high functionaries? Aye, he had much to do with them, as was shortly to be seen. His very person had attracted the attention of thousands. Amongst Archbishops, Bishops, Priests and Theologians, the many singled him out both by reason of his apparel and his commanding presence. He himself was alternately wrapt in silent prayer and stirred by the eloquence of those speakers who had preceded him. Several times he had been called upon to speak but he had said, "No, not now," until the Chairman was puzzled and wondered if he would speak at all. At length, in the late afternoon when the Chairman insisted, the Swami arose.

His face glowed like fire. His eyes surveyed in a sweep the huge assembly before him. The whole audience grew intent; a pin could have been heard to fall. Bowing to Devi Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge, he addressed his audience as, "Sisters and Brothers of America." And with that, before he had uttered another word, the whole Parliament was caught up by a great wave of enthusiasm. Hundreds rose to their feet with shouts of applause. The Parliament had gone mad; everyone was cheering, cheering, cheering! The Swami was bewildered.

For full two minutes he attempted to speak, but the wild enthusiasm of the audience prevented it.

When silence was restored the Swami began his address by thanking the youngest of nations in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world, the Vedic Order of Sannyâsins, and introducing Hinduism as "the Mother of Religions, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance." And he quoted two beautiful, illustrative passages, taken from the scriptures of Hinduism: "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take, through different tendencies, various though they may appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee!" And the other: "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me!"

It was only a short speech, but its spirit of universality, its fundamental earnestness and broad-mindedness completely captivated the whole assembly. The Swami announced the universality of religious truths and the sameness of the Goal of all religious realisations. And that he did so, was because he had sat at the feet of a Man of Realisation, in far-off Dakshineswar, and had learned from his Master, through actual contact and personal test, the truth that all religions were one, that they were all paths leading to the self-same Goal, the self-same God. When the Swami sat down exhausted with emotion, the Parliament gave him a great ovation significant of their approval.

With the exception of a short address on "Why We Disagree," in which he pointed out, by referring to the frog in the well that thought his little well the whole universe, that the insularity of religious outlook was the source of fanaticism, the Swami did not speak before the Parliament proper until September 19, when he read his celebrated paper on "Hinduism." This was a summary of the philosophy, psychology, and general ideas and statements of Hinduism. Though the Swami was not the only Indian or even the only Bengali present, he was the only representative of Hinduism proper. There were other Hindu delegates, who stood for societies, or churches or sects, but the Swami stood for Hinduism in its universal aspect. He gave forth the ideas of the Hindus concerning the soul and its destiny; he expounded the doctrines of the Vedânta philosophy, which harmonises all religious ideas and all forms of worship, viewing them as various presentations of truth and as various paths of realisation thereunto. He preached the religious philosophy of Hinduism, which declares the soul to be eternally pure, eternally free, only appearing under the bondage of matter as limited and manifold. He spoke of the attainment of the Goal,—the perception of Oneness,—to be the result of innumerable efforts of many lives. He asserted that the soul was never created. And he went on to say that death meant only a change of centre from one body to another and that one's present was determined by one's past action and the future by the present! He said that in order to realise Divinity, the self which says, "I" and "mine" must vanish, but this did not mean the denial but the utmost fulfilment of true individuality. By overcoming the small egoistical self, centred in selfishness, one attained to infinite, universal individuality. "Then alone," he said, "can death cease when I am one with life; then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself; then alone can all errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself; and this is the necessary scientific conclusion. Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one continuously changing mass in an unbroken ocean of matter, and Advaitam (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, the Soul.'' The overwhelming spirit of his address was the sense of Oneness. And he insisted that the realisation of the Oneness of the Self, aye, the very becoming and being of Divinity, inevitably led to the seeing of the Divinity manifest everywhere.)

(And inspired with this vision like another Vedic sage he addressed the vast mass of humanity before him as ''heirs of Immortal Bliss'' and exclaimed with apostolic power, ''Yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners! Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners? It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'' ''Thus it is,'' he continued, ''that the Vedas proclaim not a dreadful combination of unforgiving laws, not an endless prison of cause and effect, but that at the head of all these laws, in and through every particle of matter and force, stands One, 'by whose command the wind blows, the fire burns, the clouds rain and death stalks upon the earth.' And what is His nature? He is everywhere, the Pure and Formless One, the Almighty and the All-merciful,'' and ''knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again and attain Immortality.''

But what of the polytheism in Hinduism? He explained the psychological necessity of lower forms of religious ideas and worship, of prayers and ceremonies as aids to the purification of mind, and of image-worship as a help to spiritual concentration. There can be no idolatry where the image stands as an objectified image of Divinity. And he said: With the Hindus, moreover, religion is not centred in doctrinal assent or dissent, but in REALISATION. Surveyed in this light, forms and symbols and ceremonials are seen to be the supports, the helps of spiritual childhood, which the Hindu gradually transcends as he progresses towards spiritual manhood; even these helps are not necessary for every one or compulsory in Hinduism. He saw "Unity in Variety" in religion, and said, "Contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures. And these little variations are necessary for purposes of adaptation. But in the heart of everything the same truth reigns." In conclusion he presented the idea of a universal religion, having no temporal, spatial or sectarian bounds, but including every attitude of the human mind, from the savage to the most enlightened, in a grand synthesis, all going in their own way towards the Goal.)

" Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you. Asoka's council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose, was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.

" May He who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura-Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea. The star arose in the East ; it travelled steadily towards the West, sometimes dimmed and sometimes effulgent, till it made a circuit of the world, and now it is again rising on the very horizon of the East, the borders of the Sanpo, a thousand-fold more effulgent than it ever was before.

"Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours, it has been given to thee to march at the vanguard of civilisation with the flag of harmony."

Certainly it is not going beyond the bounds of just appreciation to say that the Swami's paper on Hinduism was the most unique and prophetic utterance in the history of religions, pointing out the truth of Oneness, of Realisation and of the Divinity of Man. Its ringing declarations of an all-inclusive ideal sounded the death-knell of the bigotry and sectarianism which had drenched the earth so often with human blood and barred the progress of civilisation in the name of religion. The unique feature of its contents was its universal toleration and its sense and spirit of religious co-operation. It had no note of criticism, or of antagonism. Its spirit was synthetic. It went counter to many of the dogmas of the various sects, yet none were attacked. His definition of a universal religion, so startling in its novelty, struck at the very root of all sectarian thought. He spoke with authority, for he was a man of realisation. He had preached in all the solemnity of direct vision, the realisation of the mystical spirit in religion as opposed to the blind credulity which most creeds uncompromisingly demand. Through him the whole burden and effulgence of the Divine consciousness bore in upon the Parliament, and thousands of those who were brought up in a special religious belief saw on that day the universality of Truth and the Oneness of all religious realisation.

The Swami undoubtedly in that hour attained the very climax of his illustrious career, preaching, through the Parliament, to all peoples of the earth, the sovereignty of Human Nature, its Divinity, and its Unity. And in that hour he was acclaimed by that vast representative assembly of nations as a Man with a Message, as an Apostle of a New Order of Religious Thought; he became a world-figure, his name ever to be associated with the Gospel of the Divinity of Man. Through this address alone, he became the impelling spirit of the New Theology in the West. He made, in short, Christianity itself re-value its contents. But the greatest service was to India herself by ushering Hinduism into the West and impressing on the Western mind the inestimable richness of its contents.

Sister Nivedita has with great insight best described the general import of his address at the Parliament, thus:

> " Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that when he began to speak it was of the religious ideas of the Hindus, but when he ended, Hinduism had been created. . . .
>
> " For it was no experience of his own that rose to the lips of the Swami Vivekananda there. He did not even take advantage of the occasion, to tell the story of his Master. Instead of either of these, it was the religious consciousness of India that spoke through him, the message of his whole people, as determined by their whole past. And as he spoke, in the youth and noonday of the West, a nation, sleeping in the shadows of the darkened half of earth, on the far side of the Pacific, waited in spirit for the words that would be borne on the dawn that was travelling towards them, to reveal to them the secret of their own greatness and strength.
>
> " Others stood beside the Swami Vivekananda, on the same platform as he, as apostles of particular creeds and churches. But it was his glory that he came to preach a religion to which each of these was, in his own words, ' Only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances to the same goal.' He stood there, as he declared, to tell of One who had said of them all, not that one or another was true, in this or that respect, or for

this or that reason, but that 'ALL these are threaded upon Me, as pearls upon a string. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power, raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there.' To the Hindu, says Vivekananda, 'Man is not travelling from error to truth, but climbing up from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher.' This, and the teaching of Mukti,—the doctrine that 'Man is to become divine by realising the divine,' that religion is perfected in us only when it has led us to 'Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, that One who is the only soul, of which all souls are but delusive manifestations'—may be taken as the two great outstanding truths which, authenticated by the longest and most complex experience in human history, India proclaimed through him to the modern world of the West.

"For India herself, the short address forms, as has been said, a brief Charter of Enfranchisement. Hinduism in its wholeness, the speaker bases on the Vedas, but he spiritualises our conception of the word, even while he utters it. To him, all that is true is Veda. 'By the Vedas,' he says, 'no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times.' Incidentally, he discloses his conception of the Sanatana Dharma. . . . To his mind, there could be no sect, no school, no sincere religious experience of the Indian people—however like an aberration it might seem to the individual—that might rightly be excluded from the embrace of Hinduism. And of this Indian Mother-Church, according to him, the distinctive doctrine is that of the Ishta Devata, the right of each soul to choose its own path, and to seek God in its own way. . . .

"Yet would not this inclusion of all, this freedom of each, be the glory of Hinduism that it is, were it not for her supreme call, of sweetest promise, 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that dwell in higher spheres! For I have found that Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion. And knowing Him, ye also shall be saved from death.' Here is the word for the sake of which all the rest exists and has existed. Here is the crowning realisation, into which all others are resolvable."

Following his paper on "Hinduism" the Swami spoke on "Religion not the Crying Need of India," in which he commented on the fact that it was not religion of which the Indians stood in need, but bread. It was a short address, but therein one finds embodied his solution of India's pressing problems. He stated also, that what had brought him to the far West was to seek aid for his impoverished people. By his words the Parliament was made aware that the man who stood before it was not only a priest but a patriot as well. The Swami gave addresses before the Scientific Section also. The first occasion on which he spoke in these conferences, as recorded in the Rev. J. H. Barrow's book on the *World's Parliament of Religions,* was at the one held on the morning of September 22, to discuss "Orthodox Hinduism and the Vedânta Philosophy." That same afternoon the Swami again spoke on "The Modern Religions of India." Another conference was held on the 23rd on the subject of the foregoing addresses. On the 25th the Swami spoke in the afternoon session, the subject of the address being, "The Essence of the Hindu Religion." The reader might be informed here that four other addresses in these conferences were given by the Swami.

On the 26th the Swami delivered before the Parliament of Religions a short address called "Buddhism, the Fulfilment of Hinduism." He pointed out that Hinduism was divided, as it were, into two branches, one being the ceremonial, and the other the purely spiritual. Buddha interpreted the spiritual elements of the Dharma, with their natural social conclusions, to the people. He was the first Teacher in the world to carry on missionary work and to conceive the idea of proselytising. "Sâkya Muni," said the Swami, "came not to destroy, but he was the fulfilment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the

Hindus." Eventually he said, "Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism nor Buddhism without Hinduism," and that the need in India today was to "join the wonderful intellect of the Brâhmana with the heart, the noble soul, the wonderful humanising power of the Great Master."

The international aspect of the Parliament of Religions took seventeen days, and more than a thousand papers were read before it. The Swami was allowed to speak longer than the ordinary half-hour, and being a popular speaker was always put down last to hold the audience. The people would sit from ten in the morning to ten at night, with only a recess of half-an-hour for luncheon, and listen to paper after paper in which most of them were not interested, to hear their favourite. Such was their enthusiasm!

On the 27th, the Swami delivered his "Address at the Final Session" and here he again rises to one of his happiest and most luminous moods by declaring:

> " The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to the law of growth. . .
>
> " If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of his resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.' "

Thus did the unknown monk blossom into a world-figure, the Parivrâjaka of solitary days in India become the Prophet of a New Dispensation!

On all sides his name resounded. Life-size pictures of him were seen posted up in the streets of Chicago, with the words "The Monk Vivekananda" beneath them, and passers-by would stop to do reverence with bowed head. The press rang with his fame. The best known and most conservative of the metropolitan newspapers proclaimed him as a Prophet and a Seer. Indeed, *The New York Herald* spoke of him in these words:

> "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation."

The Boston Evening Transport wrote of him:

> "He is a great favourite at the Parliament from the grandeur of his sentiments and his appearance as well. If he merely crosses the platform he is applauded; and this marked approval of thousands he accepts in a child-like spirit of gratification without a trace of conceit. . . . At the Parliament of Religions they used to keep Vivekananda until the end of the programme, to make people stay till the end of the session. On a warm day, when a prosy speaker talked too long and people began going home by hundreds, the Chairman would get up and announce that Swami Vivekananda would give a short address just before the benediction. Then he would have the peaceable hundreds perfectly in tether. The four thousand fanning people in the Hall of Columbus would sit smiling and expectant, waiting for an hour or two of other men's speeches, to listen to Vivekananda for fifteen minutes. The Chairman knew the old rule of keeping the best until the last."

Many leading newspapers of U. S. A., such as *The Rutherford American, The Press of America, The Interior Chicago, The New York Critique* wrote eloquently about Swami Vivekananda.

Many papers had quoted the Swami's addresses in full. *The Review of Reviews* described his address as "noble and sublime." Similar brilliant accounts of the Swami's triumph appeared in other papers too numerous to quote here. Amongst personal appreciations, the Hon'ble Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell wrote some time after:

> " No religious body made so profound an impression upon the Parliament and the American people at large, as did Hinduism. . . . And by far the most important and typical representative of Hinduism was Swami Vivekananda, who, in fact, was beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament. He frequently spoke, both on the floor of the Parliament itself and at the meeting of the Scientific Section, over which I had the honour to preside, and, on all occasions he was received with greater enthusiasm than any other speaker, Christian or Pagan. The people thronged about him wherever he went and hung with eagerness on his every word. . . . The most rigid of orthodox Christians say of him, ' He is indeed a prince among men!' . . . "

And the Chairman of the General Committee of the Congress, the Rev. J. H. Barrows, said:

> " Swami Vivekananda exercised a wonderful influence over his auditors."

Dr. Annie Besant giving her impression of the Swami at the Parliament wrote long after:

> " A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt,—such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, but warrior-monk was he, and the first impression was of the warrior rather than of the monk, for he was off the platform, and his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race—the representative of the oldest of living religions, surrounded by curious gazers of nearly the youngest, and by no means inclined to give step, as though the hoary faith he embodied was in aught inferior to the noblest there. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name, and the herald remembered

the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

"On the platform another side came out. The dignity and the inborn sense of worth and power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of that matchless evangel of the East which is the heart, the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self. Enraptured, the huge multitude hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost, not a cadence missed! 'That man a heathen!' said one, as he came out of the great hall, 'and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us.'"

Hundreds of enlightened and liberal-minded persons, Emersonians, Transcendentalists, Neo-Christians, Theosophists, Universalists, Congregationalists, either hearing him personally while in attendance at the Parliament, or reading the glowing accounts about him, felt that the Swami was, indeed, another Oriental Master come to them with a new Message. And so meteoric was the transformation of the Swami from obscurity to fame, that it can be truly said that he "awoke one morning to find himself famous."

But to the Swami the recognition of his eloquence and the glorification of his name, far from touching or elating him, filled him with despondency. Indeed, on the very night of his triumph, he actually wept like a child at the thought that for him the joy of the free life of the unknown monk was at an end. In spite of his hatred of name and fame he was destined to be thwarted in his quest for obscurity. He was the monk with a Message and he had been forced out by Divine Providence. No longer could he be the itinerant monk; no more the quiet, solemn peace for him; it was to be strenuous, ceaseless labour with terrible, unintermittent demands upon his time and personality.

The Swami took himself and his Message seriously, and he was filled with courage to fulfil his Master's will. An incident that occurred in the Parliament,—and which is told in the second volume of the *Historians' History of the World* by *The Times*, on pages 547 and 548, which were substituted in deference to the violent objection taken by the Indian subscribers to some serious calumnies published therein against Hinduism,—illustrates the Swami's boldness of spirit and self-confidence:

> "A striking illustration of what in another case would be termed insularity of outlook was brought to view by a noted Hindu when addressing a vast audience at the World's Congress of Religions in America, in the city of Chicago, in 1893. Pausing in the midst of his discourse, the speaker asked that every member of the audience who had read the sacred books of the Hindus, and who therefore had first-hand knowledge of their religion, would raise his hand. Only three or four hands were raised, though the audience represented, presumably, the leading theologians of many lands. Glancing benignly over the assembly, the Hindu raised himself to his full height, and in a voice every accent of which must have smitten the audience as a rebuke, pronounced these simple words, 'And yet you dare to judge us!'"

The Swami was not only brilliant, but strong in the hour of his unparalleled success. Aye, without catering to popularity, he assumed a severely critical attitude, and had the audience before him not understood his greatness, it would certainly have accused him of pedantry and 'insularity of outlook.' But his love was too deep and sincere to be misunderstood. He found that India and her spiritual ideas had indeed been misrepresented to the public in the West and felt that he must constantly be on the defensive with regard to the merits of the Hindu religion. He always sought to give Hinduism a true status in the West.

His signal success at the Parliament of Religions, however, created jealousy amongst some of the Christian Missionaries and, shame to say, in one of his own countrymen, a leader of a progressive religious movement in India. The latter saw that his own great name and fame were being eclipsed by a new rival. When asked about the antecedents of the Hindu monk, he had whispered to the authorities of the Parliament that the Swami belonged to a vagabond sect in India with no status or influence, and that he was a fraud. Fortunately they were too broad-minded to listen and accepted the Swami's irresistible personality as sufficient credentials. He received no recognition from the Theosophical leaders and representatives in America, who tried their best to cry him down. But these attempts proved futile, and he was the man of the hour wherever he went.

But in the midst of all this popularity the Swami's heart continued to bleed for India. Personally he had no more wants. The mansions of some of the wealthiest of Chicago society were open to him, and he was received as an honoured guest there. On the very day of his triumph, he was invited by a man of great wealth and distinction to his home in one of the most fashionable parts of the city of Chicago. Here he was entertained right royally; a princely room fitted with luxury beyond anything he could conceive was assigned to him. But instead of feeling happy in this splendid environment, he was miserable. Name and fame and the approval of thousands had in no way affected him; though sumptuously cared for, he was the same Sannyâsin as of old, thinking of India's poor. As he retired the first night and lay upon his bed, the terrible contrast between poverty-stricken India and opulent America oppressed him. He could not sleep pondering over India's plight. The bed of down seemed to be a bed of thorns. The pillow was wet with his tears. He went to the window and gazed out into the darkness until he was well-nigh faint with sorrow. At length, overcome with emotion he fell to the ground, crying out, "O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come when millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, and here they spend millions of rupees upon their personal comfort! Who will raise the masses in India! Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how I can help them." Over and over again one finds the same intense love for India shining out in his words and actions. The deep and spontaneous love which welled in his heart for the poor, the distressed and the despised, was the never-ceasing source of all his activities.

Henceforth the student of the Swami's life is led into a world of intense thought and work. He will discover that hand in hand with the message of Hinduism to the West, the Swami was constantly studying, observing, trying to turn every new experience to advantage in solving the problems of his country. Though the dusty roads and the parched tongue and the hunger of his Parivrâjaka days were ascetic in the extreme, yet the experiences he was to undergo in foreign lands were to be even more severe. He was to strain himself to the utmost. He was to work until work was no longer possible and the body dropped off from sheer exhaustion.

The first intimation of the character of his future work was an invitation from a prominent lecture bureau to make a lecturing tour of America. He accepted it as the best way to broadcast the ideas with which his mind teemed, and to disillusionise the Western mind of its erroneous notions concerning

India and its culture. It was also a way to become independent and get funds for the various philanthropic and religious works in India which he had in mind. Now we see the Swami travelling hither and thither in America, visiting numerous cities, telling of the glories of India and the greatness of Indian culture.

In his tours the Swami visited all the larger cities of the Eastern and Mid-Western States lecturing in Chicago, Iowa City, Des Moines, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Hartford, Buffalo, Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, Washington, Brooklyn and New York. Unfortunately there are but few details of this noteworthy tour. Here and there one catches glimpses of his illuminating utterances and the glowing descriptions of his personality as these were recorded in the daily newspapers. Just when the Swami commenced his lecturing tour is unknown. It must have been in the very late autumn or the early winter months when, to use his own expression, he "began to whirl to and fro." He had many experiences, some extraordinarily spiritual, showing that a great power was working in and through him. Studying America as he did, he came to know it in many ways. During this period he made his headquarters with the family of Mr. George W. Hale of Chicago, where he always received the warmest welcome and was looked upon with great reverence and regard. He often spoke of their loving kindness and attachment to him.

But the lecturing tour was not altogether a pleasant experience. His lack of suitable apparel caused him to suffer intensely from cold. Then, too, the constant demands of the lecture platform told on him. He always spoke extemporaneously. Everywhere he went he was enthusiastically received, people flocking about him and clergymen beseeching him to come and lecture in their churches. Yet at the same time he had to run the gauntlet of innumerable irritating questions, betraying either a monumental ignorance of Hindu culture, or erroneous ideas of life in India. Some there were who flatly contradicted him on subjects of which they were in entire ignorance; then he fell upon them like a thunderbolt. *The Iowa State Register* speaking of him said:

> " But woe to the man who undertook to combat the monk on his own ground and that was where they all tried it who tried it at all. His replies came like flashes of lightning and the venturesome questioner was sure to be impaled on the Indian's shining intellectual lance. The workings of his mind, so subtle and so brilliant, so well stored and so well trained, sometimes dazzled his hearers, but it was always a most interesting study. Vivekananda and his cause found a place in the hearts of all true Christians."

The Swami had no patience with small-mindedness or fanaticism. He had great reverence for Christ and His teachings; but he pointed out the faults and defects of Christian civilisation in unmistakable terms, and occasionally was sternly critical. As an instance may be cited the following from one of his lectures at Detroit in the February of 1894:

> " One thing I would tell you, and I do not mean any unkind criticism. You train and educate and clothe and pay men to do what?—to come over to my country and curse and abuse all my forefathers, my religion and my everything. They walk near a temple and say: 'You idolaters, you will go to hell!' . . . But the Hindu is mild; he smiles and passes on saying, 'Let the fools talk.' That is the attitude. And then you who train men to abuse and criticise, if I just touch you with the least bit of criticism, with the kindest of purpose, you shrink and cry: 'Do not touch us; we are Americans, we criticise, curse and abuse all the

heathens of the world, but do not touch us, we are sensitive plants.' You may do whatever you please, but we are content to live as we do ; and in one thing we are better off ;—we never teach our children to swallow such horrible stuff as that man is vile. And whenever your ministers criticise us let them remember this: if all India stands up and takes all the mud that is at the bottom of the Indian Ocean and throws it up against the Western countries, it will not be doing an infinitesimal part of that which you are doing to us. And what for? Did we ever send one missionary to convert anybody in the West? We say to you, 'You are welcome to your religion, but allow us to have ours.' You call yours an aggressive religion. You are aggressive, but how many have you converted? Every sixth man in the world is a Chinese subject,—all Buddhists ; . . . and it may not be palatable, but this Christian morality, the Catholic Church, and many other things are derived from them. Well, and how was this done? Without the shedding of one drop of blood! With all your brag and boasting where has your Christianity succeeded without the sword? Show me one place in the whole world. One, I say, throughout the history of the Christian religion,—one ; I do not want two. I know how your forefathers were converted. They had to be converted or killed, that was all. . . . 'We are the only one.' And why? 'Because we can kill others.' The Arabs said that ; they bragged. And where is the Arab now? He is the Bedouin. The Romans used to say that, and where are they now? And we have been sitting there on our blocks of stone. 'Blessed are the peacemakers ; for they shall be called the children of God!' Such things tumble down ; they are built upon sand ; they cannot remain long. Everything that has selfishness for its basis, competition for its right hand and enjoyment as its goal, must die sooner or later. If you want to live, go back to Christ. You are not Christians. No, as a nation, you are not. Go back to Christ. Go back to Him who had nowhere to lay His head. . . . Yours is a religion preached in the name of luxury. What an irony of fate! Reverse this if you want to live ; reverse this. It is all hypocrisy that I have heard in this country. If this nation is going to live, let it go back to Him. You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. All this prosperity, all this from Christ? Christ would have denied all such heresies. . . . If you can join these two, this wonderful prosperity with that ideal of

Christ, it is well; but if you cannot, better go back to Him and give up these vain pursuits. Better be ready to live in rags with Christ than to live in palaces without Him."

It is no wonder that utterances like these aroused bitter opposition from the Christian propagandists. They tried to injure his reputation, by abusing and vilifying him. They even went to the length, so the Swami said, of tempting him with young women, promising them recompense if they succeeded. They desisted when they found him as simple and pure as a child. It seems almost incredible that they should have gone so far in the name of religion. Amidst all these distractions the Swami kept his equanimity of mind, trusting to the Lord and consoling himself with the thought that the highest-minded Christians and clergymen were his avowed admirers, and in many instances even his followers.

Thus one finds the Swami, now in brilliant flashes of wit or repartee, now in terms of scathing criticism, uttering his views concerning the worth of Western culture. Perhaps, on one occasion he would retort with sarcastic humour as he did to his questioner in one of his lectures in Minneapolis, when asked if Hindu mothers threw their children to the crocodiles in the rivers, by saying, "Yes, Madam! They threw me in, but like your fabled Jonah I got out again." Or on another occasion he would condemn with all seriousness and with remarkable penetration the aggressive and destructive characteristics in Western civilisation, by saying, "I am rather a plain-spoken man, but I mean well. I want to tell you the truth. I am not here to flatter you; it is not my business. If I wanted to do that I would have opened a fashionable church in Fifth Avenue in New York. You are my children. I want to show you the way out of self to God by pointing out to you your errors, your defects and your vanities. Therefore you do not hear me praising your current Christianity or your ideals of civilisation, or the peculiar forms of character and life that are developed by Western ethical standards." Once in Detroit the Swami mercilessly asked, "Where is your Christianity? Where is there a place for Jesus the Christ in this selfish struggle, in this constant tendency to destroy? True, if He were here today, He would not find a stone whereon to lay His head." When a distinguished clergyman wondered how the Swami could understand the Christ Ideal so well, he replied, "Why, Jesus was an Oriental! It is therefore natural that we Orientals should understand Him truly and readily."

The Swami had many friends, both clergymen and distinguished laymen, who espoused his cause and answered his critics and urged him to do likewise. But he replied, "Why should I attack in return? It is not the monk's place to defend himself. Besides, Truth will have its way, believe me, Truth shall stand." Sometimes his only reply, when he was told of some baseless assertions newly made against him, would be a prayer.

As early as January, 1894, the Swami found that he was being maliciously attacked by zealous Missionaries in India, who knew that his addresses were harmful to their proselytising activities. In a letter from India, mention was made of an American newspaper in which he was very sharply criticised. The Swami wrote in reply to a disciple:

> "The criticism of the paper you mention is not to be taken as the attitude of the American people. The paper is almost unknown here and is what they call a 'blue-nose Presbyterian paper,' very bigoted. Still all the 'blue-noses' are not ungentlemanly. The American people, and many of the clergy are very hospitable to me. That paper wanted to

gain a little notoriety by attacking a man who was being lionised by society. That trick is well known here, and they do not think anything of it. Of course, our Indian Missionaries may try to make capital out of it. If they do, tell them, 'Mark, Jew, a judgment has come upon you!' Their old building is tottering to its foundation and must come down in spite of their hysterical shrieks. I pity them—if their means of living fine lives in India is cut down by the influx of Oriental religions here. But not one of their leading clergy is ever against me."

It was true the leading clergy and all progressive thinkers and earnest-minded seekers after truth were his friends. But the Swami was not concerned about that. He knew that if it was the Will of the Most High that his message should be broadcast nothing on earth could stand against him. His was the spirit of the Rishis of old. His one earnest hope was to gain some disciples, whose spiritual earnestness and sincerity would form the nucleus from which would be disseminated his gospel. Other than that and the regeneration of his motherland, he had no desire. He remained always the meditative monk, the spiritual genius, the man of the Parivrâjaka background, the child of the Mother of the Universe, awaiting the commands and the leading from On High.

His lectures at this period were intensely religious and philosophical. He found, however, that the lecture bureau was exploiting and defrauding him. For example, at one lecture, the returns were $2,500, of which the Swami received only $200. At first in order to hold him the manager had given him as much as $900 for a single lecture; but after a time, for reasons best known to himself, he lowered the rate until it became apparent, even to as unworldly-minded a person as the Swami, that he was not being treated fairly. After some weeks, he severed his relations with the lecture bureau, although it meant a considerable pecuniary loss. But all glory and financial success was not for himself. His object was to save up a sufficient amount of money wherewith to start philanthropic centres in different provinces of India. But even with this incentive he became disgusted with what he termed "the nonsense of public life and newspaper blazoning."

He felt happy that the Americans had a great desire for the Highest Truth. But as in all other lands he found many quasi-metaphysicians and spiritual teachers who traded and grew fat on the religious credulity and earnestness of the people in their search for Truth. These made many unsuccessful efforts to have him join their ranks; but the result was the reverse of their desires, for it made him only the more determined to do work, real spiritual work, for which he would not accept any recompense. He would give freely as the Rishis of ancient India had given.

Meanwhile his mind was busy making contrasts between the Western and the Asiatic culture, and studying the advantages of many of the industrial and economic systems of the West, so that he could apply them later on in definite and practical ways to the wants of his own people. He visited various museums, universities, institutions and art galleries trying to comprehend the spirit of Western life. Gazing at some work of art, or studying some signal engineering or architectural feat, his thought would leap in admiration of the greatness of the human mind. He became a keen student of the public and social life of America. Often he would gaze in wonder at the mad rush of energy on all sides and view with astonishment the massive, towering palaces of industry, in the large cities. And the contrast between the pomp and power of the Western world, its complicated and highly polished social and industrial life, and the poverty and crowded misery of the Indian cities with here and there some naked Sâdhu covered with ashes, would be borne in on him. The greatness of his spirit enabled him to hold the balance even between the two worlds,—the East and the West. The result of these continued and thoughtful observations were embodied in his learned treatise, "The East and the West."

And yet, intense as were his activities, he did not lose touch with his disciples in the East. He was in frequent correspondence with disciples in Madras, Rajputana, and other places, teaching, consoling, and inspiring them with his own enthusiasm. He gave them the benefit of his insight into the modes and customs and the greatness of Western life and urged upon them the necessity of organisation and united effort and trust in God. But above all his concern with them was spiritual and the Guru in him came out in all his utterances. He had met numerous women of high intellectual attainments in America, and it was his delight to cross swords with them intellectually. This was a new experience, for in India the Zenana system excluded women from social and intellectual contacts. One sees the Swami in his letters to India drawing sharp contrasts between the emancipation of Western women and the seclusion of women amongst his own people. He writes, "Can you better the condition of your women? Then there will be hope for your well-being. Otherwise you will remain as backward as you are now." And he concludes by saying, "As regards spirituality, the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is far superior to ours. We will teach them our spirituality, and assimilate what is best in their society."

It was touching to many who met him in the West to see how he endeavoured to fit himself in with the Western standards of good manners. East and West, so different in all other things, are different also in their forms of etiquette. He would oftentimes pause to observe, or would turn to his host or hostess, questioning with all the simplicity of a child as to the right social form. "How is it?" he would ask, "Does the gentleman or the lady precede in coming up or going down the stairs?" As a guest he was given complete personal liberty. They understood that at any moment the mood of insight might come upon him and he would become oblivious of what was happening about him. As with his Master, even the simplest phenomenon of life would remind him of revelations and spiritual truths. The states of meditation and recollection were always with him. Writes Sister Nivedita:

> "The Swami never seemed, it must be remembered, to be doing Tapasyâ, but his whole life was a concentration so intense that for any one else it would have been a most terrible Tapasyâ. When he first went to America, it was extremely difficult for him to control the momentum that carried him into meditation. 'When he sits down to meditate,' had said one whose guest he was in India, 'in two minutes he feels nothing, though his body be black with mosquitoes.' With this habit thus deeply ingrained, he landed in America, that country of railroads and tramways, and complicated engagement lists, and at first it was no uncommon thing for him to be carried two or three times round a tram-circuit, only disturbed periodically by the conductor asking for the fare. He was very much ashamed of such occurrences, however, and worked hard to overcome them."

Meanwhile news was pouring into India of the unparalleled success of the Swami in America. The Indian Journals and Magazines were filled with the American reports of his great address at the Parliament; these quotations, extracts and comments were literally devoured by the Hindus, from Madras to Almora, from Calcutta to Bombay.

The monks of the Ramakrishna Order at Baranagore also read the accounts of the Swami's success, but though they could not recognise their Naren in the Swami Vivekananda yet something told them in their heart of hearts that it must be he. They had not heard of him for several years. Six months after the Parliament of Religions a letter from the Swami himself settled the matter once for all. Their happiness was inexpressible. They were amazed in spite of Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy, "Naren shall shake the world to its foundations!"

The general public in India was transported with joy at the glowing accounts of the welcome accorded to the Swami and the message of Hinduism he preached. This was a new order of experience for Hindusthan,—to receive recognition of her greatness, to be vindicated as "the Spiritual Teacher of the World."

The Swami's name became a household word in every province of India. Madras and Bengal were naturally most enthusiastic and cordial in their appreciation. Large and influential meetings were held at many places to send addresses to the Swami congratulating him on his success and applauding his work in the cause of Hinduism in America. Bhaskar Setupati, the Raja of Ramnad, sent a message of congratulation. Maharaja Ajit Singh of Khetri presided over a Durbar held for this special purpose, and conveyed to the Swami in his own name and that of his subjects the heart-felt thanks of the State for his worthy representation of Hinduism at the Chicago Parliament. And in Madras, Raja Sir Ramaswamy Moodaliar, Sir Subramanya Aiyer, C. I. E., and many other distinguished citizens and scholars took part in a great meeting where stirring speeches were made, the reports of which were duly sent to the Swami. Meetings were also held at Kumbakonum and other cities in the South, and addresses forwarded to him. But in Calcutta, the birth-place of the Swami, the enthusiasm reached a pitch of frenzy. And the Swami, in distant America, took India's sanction of his work and message not so much as a personal appreciation of himself, but as an indication that the centre of the national ideal of ancient Aryavarta was still sound,—that its spiritual foundation stood unshaken, strong as ever. He accepted the generous appreciation of his work in this spirit and sent replies, the most notable and stirring of which were those to the Hindus of Madras and the Maharaja of Khetri.

The citizens of Calcutta organised a great representative meeting in the Town Hall on September 5, 1894 to thank the Swami and the American people. The meeting was organised by the most representative members of the Hindu Community, and attended by people of all shades of opinion. Some of the most well-known Pandits as well as the landed aristocracy, the High Court Judges, noted public men, pleaders, politicians, professors, and prominent men in many other walks of life took part in the meeting. It was presided over by Raja Peary Mohun Mookerjee, C. S. I. The following resolutions were moved and adopted with eloquent speeches eulogising the Swami's work and contribution towards the dissemination of the Hindu culture among the Western nations:

"1. That this meeting desires to record its grateful appreciation of the great services rendered to the cause of Hinduism by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and of his subsequent work in America.

"2. That this meeting tenders its best thanks to Dr. J. H. Barrows, the Chairman, and Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, the

President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and to the American people generally, for the cordial and sympathetic reception they have accorded to Swami Vivekananda.

"3. That this meeting requests the Chairman to forward to Sreemat Vivekananda Swami, Dr. Barrows and Mr. Snell copies of the foregoing Resolutions together with the following letter addressed to Swami Vivekananda.

"TO SREEMAT VIVEKANANDA SWAMI

"Dear Sir,

"As Chairman of a large, representative and influential meeting of the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta and the Suburbs, held in the Town Hall of Calcutta, on the 5th of September, 1894, I have the pleasure to convey to you the thanks of the local Hindu Community for your able representation of their religion at the Parliament of Religions that met at Chicago in September, 1893.

"The trouble and sacrifice you have incurred by your visit to America as a representative of the Hindu Religion are profoundly appreciated by all whom you have done the honour to represent. But their special acknowledgements are due to you for the services you have rendered to the cause they hold so dear, their sacred Arya Dharma, by your speeches and your ready responses to the questions of inquiries. No exposition of the general principles of the Hindu Religion could, within the limits of a lecture, be more accurate and lucid than what you gave in your address to the Parliament of Religions on Tuesday, the 19th September, 1893. And your subsequent utterances on the same subject on other occasions have been equally clear and precise. It has been the misfortune of Hindus to have their religion misunderstood and misrepresented through ages, and therefore they cannot but feel specially grateful to one of them who had the courage and the ability to speak the truth about it and dispel illusions, among a strange people, in a strange land, professing a different religion. Their thanks are due no less to the audiences and the organisers of the meetings, who have received you kindly, given you opportunities for speaking, encouraged you in your work, and heard you in a patient and charitable spirit. Hinduism has, for the first time in its history, found a Missionary, and by a rare good fortune it has found one so able and accomplished as yourself. Your fellow-countrymen, fellow-citizens and fellow-Hindus feel that they would be wanting in an obvious duty if they did not convey to you their hearty sympathy and earnest gratitude for all your labours, in spreading a true knowledge of their ancient faith. May God grant you strength and energy to carry on the good work you have begun!

Yours faithfully,
Peary Mohun Mookerjee,
Chairman "

The lectures that were delivered on the occasion by such prominent men as Mr. N. N. Ghosh, Sir Surendranath Banerjee, and others created a great wave of spiritual enthusiasm. It was as if the Spirit of the Sanâtana Dharma were there as a great overshadowing influence of peace and insight and benediction, thrilling and electrifying the utterances of the speakers. The name, Vivekananda, rang with acclaim throughout the length and breadth of Hindusthan; everywhere he was recognised as a Great Achârya, the Man who had come to fill a NEED. He roused the spirit of Hinduism from the lethargy and somnolence into which it had fallen; and in these meetings one already became aware of that approaching dawn when India, as of old, would become gloriously self-conscious and supremely powerful, not by warfare and streams of blood but by the infinitely more powerful force of the incomparable Vedas and the Vedânta.

XXII

VARYING EXPERIENCES AS PREACHER

Before one proceeds to enter into the life of the Swami as a great teacher, training a group of earnest disciples in America, it would be well to take into account many experiences that he had by the way as a lecturer touring through the country. Naturally he met many persons of note and distinction, and of these was the famous agnostic and orator, Mr. Robert Ingersoll, with whom the Swami on several occasions discussed religious and philosophical subjects. During the course of these conversations the great agnostic cautioned the Swami not to be too bold and outspoken, to be careful in his preaching of new doctrines and his criticisms of the ways of life and thought of the people. When asked the reason why, Mr. Ingersoll replied, "Forty years ago you would have been hanged if you had come to preach in this country, or you would have been burned alive. You would have been stoned out of the villages, if you had come even much later." The Swami was surprised; he could not believe that there was such a great amount of fanaticism and bigotry in the American nation, and he told Mr. Ingersoll as much. But there was a difference between the modes of teaching of these two great preachers; for Mr. Ingersoll antagonised all religious ideas, whereas the Swami, though presenting a new order of religious thought, was tolerant of all religions and a devotee of the Christ. The difference between these two great souls is best presented in an anecdote told by the Swami himself. "Ingersoll once said to me," said the Swami in the course of a class talk, "'I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of.' I replied, 'I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do; and I get more out of it. I *know* I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I know that there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property; and so I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousandfold more out of it. Get every single drop!'"

One of the most trying experiences that the Swami had while on his lecturing tour occurred when he was visiting a Western town. Hearing him speak of Indian philosophy, a number of university men, who had become cowboys, took him at his word when he said that one who had realised the Highest was equanimous under all conditions and was not disturbed by any outward influences. They decided to put him to the test and so invited him to lecture to them. When he arrived they escorted him to a wooden tub which they had placed with the bottom up to serve as a platform in the public square of their village. The Swami commenced his address, soon losing himself in the subject. Suddenly there was a deafening noise of shots which went whizzing past his ears! Undisturbed he continued his lecture to the end as though nothing was happening. When he had finished, the cowboys flocked about him and in their boisterous language, they pronounced him "a right good fellow."

But this incident is complemented by another, which, by its genuine human touch, reveals the fineness, and the greatness of the man. Being an

Oriental he was often in the South mistaken for a Negro. Once, when he was leaving a train, a Negro porter, who had seen the Swami welcomed by a reception committee, came up to him, saying that he had heard how in him one of his own people had become a great man and that he would like to have the privilege of shaking hands with him. The Swami warmly clasped the hands of the railway-porter and exclaimed, "Thank you! Thank you, brother!" He related many similar confidences made to him by Negroes and he never resented being thought of as one of them. It happened several times in important cities of the South, that he was refused admittance to the hotels because of his dark colour, the proprietors saying that they could not accommodate a Negro and showing him the door with scant courtesy; but even in these dilemmas he refused to say that he was an Oriental. Whereupon the manager of his lecturing tour had to make other arrangements for him. When the hotel people read his lectures in the morning papers and heard his name spoken broadcast with reverence, they were mortified and hurried to him to offer apologies. Even in the barber shops of Northern cities, he was shown the door with caustic remarks. Long after, when a Western disciple referring to these incidents asked him in surprise why he had not informed them who he was, he replied, "What! Rise at the expense of another! I did not come to earth for that!" He was never ashamed of his race. On the contrary, he was proud that he was an Indian, and when any Westerner displayed a sense of superiority before him, because of the fairness of his skin, he did not escape his stern reproof. Sister Nivedita writes:

> " He was scornful in his repudiation of the *pseudo*-ethnology of privileged races. ' If I am grateful to my white-skinned

Aryan ancestor,' he said, 'I am far more so to my yellow-skinned Mongolian ancestor, and most so of all, to the black-skinned Negritoid!'

"He was immensely proud, in his own physiognomy, of what he called his 'Mongolian jaw,' regarding it as a sign of 'bull-dog tenacity of purpose;' and referring to this particular race-element, which he believed to be behind every Aryan people, he one day exclaimed, 'Don't you see? The Tartar is the wine of the race! He gives energy and power to every blood!'"

Wheresoever he went in the course of his lecture tours the Swami found his name blazoned in the papers. The reporters and editors literally besieged him on all sides. He was made to answer innumerable questions with regard to his habits of life, his religion, his philosophy, his views of Western civilisation, his scheme of future work, his diet, his antecedents, the manners and customs of his people, the political conditions of his land, and a host of other subjects. In this manner the newspapers made the American public acquainted with many details of his personal as well as his country's history. When he came to Detroit, in the month of February, 1894, he was sought after by newspaper reporters day in and day out. It would be well to quote here what the *Detroit Free Press,* one of the leading journals not only of this city but of America itself, writes concerning him, as the description of Swami given in this paper is typical of what was printed of him elsewhere in other cities:

"Since the Parliament he has spoken to immense audiences in many towns and cities, who have but one opinion of praise and are enthusiastic over his magnetic power and his way of giving light and life to every subject he touches upon. Naturally his views of great questions, coming like himself from the other side of the globe, are refreshing and stirring to American people. His hearers are pleasantly astonished when the dark-hued, dark-haired, dignified man rises in rich yellow robes and speaks their own language with fluency, distinctness and correctness."

Commenting on his lecture of February 18, 1894, this same paper reports:

" Swami Vivekananda, Hindu philosopher and priest, concluded his series of lectures, or rather sermons, at the Unitarian church last night speaking on ' The Divinity of Man.' In spite of the bad weather, the church was crowded almost to the doors, half an hour before the Eastern brother—as he likes to be called—appeared. All professions and business occupations were represented in the attentive audience,—lawyers, judges, ministers of the Gospel, merchants, a Rabbi,—not to speak of the many ladies who have, by their repeated attendance and rapt attention, shown a decided inclination to shower adulation upon the dusky visitor, whose drawing-room attraction is as great as his ability in the rostrum.

" The lecture last night was less descriptive than preceding ones, and for nearly two hours Vivekananda wove a metaphysical texture on affairs human and divine, so logical that he made science appear like common sense. It was a beautiful logical garment that he wove, replete with as many bright colours and as attractive and pleasing to contemplate as one of the many-hued fabrics made by hand in his native land and scented with the most seductive fragrance of the Orient. The dusky gentleman uses poetical imagery as an artist uses colours, and the hues are laid on just where they belong, the result being somewhat bizarre in effect, and yet having a peculiar fascination. Kaleidoscopic were the swiftly succeeding logical conclusions, and the deft manipulator was rewarded for his efforts from time to time by enthusiastic applause."

Writing of her appreciation of the Swami, in his first visit to Detroit, Mrs. Mary C. Funke, a well-known society woman of that city, says many years after:

" February 14th, 1894, stands out in my memory as a day apart, a sacred, holy day ; for it was then that I first saw the form and listened to the voice of that great soul, that spiritual giant, the Swami Vivekananda, who, two years later, to my great joy and never-ceasing wonder, accepted me as a disciple.

" He had been lecturing in the large cities of this country, and on the above date gave the first of a series of lectures in Detroit, in the Unitarian church. The large edifice was literally packed and the Swami received an ovation. I can see him yet as he stepped upon the platform, a regal, majestic figure, vital, forceful, dominant, and at the first sound of the wonderful voice, a voice all music—now like the plaintive minor strain of an Eolian harp, again, deep, vibrant, resonant—there was a hush, a stillness that could almost be felt, and the vast audience breathed as one man.

"The Swami gave five public lectures and he held his audiences, for his was the grasp of the 'master hand,' and he spoke as one with authority. His arguments were logical, convincing, and in his most brilliant oratorical flights never once did he lose sight of the main issue,—the truth he wished to drive home."

Indeed, one of the notable characteristics in all the Swami's addresses delivered at this time, which the newspaper descriptions of him did not fail to notice, was his patriotism. To quote one of them: "His patriotism was perfervid. The manner in which he speaks of 'My country' is most touching. That one phrase revealed him not only as a monk, but as a man of his people."

Everywhere he went the Swami gave himself and his time unstintingly in service. He gave and gave, until the strain became intense. He accepted every invitation, thinking that it was an opportunity afforded him to help others. He felt that he was being guided by the Lord; and it was true of him that he exerted as great an influence in private as in public life. To present the ideals of the civilisation and the religious consciousness of his own race to the peoples of the West, to enhance the spiritual vision of all with whom he came into contact, to enlighten the Western mind with the knowledge of the Advaita Vedânta,—these were the ideas which possessed him. The spiritual side of his message was constantly in the foreground, and he found that though India might be seriously in need of material aid, the West stood infinitely more in need of spiritual assistance. So he decided that he should give himself to the West as well as to the East, that he should give himself, in fact, to the whole wide world.

During this period and continuously the Swami received invitation after invitation to speak before clubs and churches and before private gatherings. Most of these he readily accepted in so far as was practicable for him, and thus it is no wonder to find him travelling here and there and everywhere in the Eastern and Mid-Western States of America, numbers of times, from Chicago to New York and from Boston to Baltimore.

He had to deliver twelve to fourteen lectures or sometimes even more a week. He felt greatly the excessive physical and mental strain; he confessed that on his lecture tour after a time the strain was so great that he felt as if he had exhausted himself intellectually. At such times he asked himself, "What is to be done! What shall I say in my lecture to-morrow!" And in his extremity he was aided in many wonderful ways. For instance, at dead of night he would hear a voice shouting at him the very thoughts which he was to speak on the morrow. Sometimes it would come as from a long distance, speaking to him down a great avenue, as it were; and then it would draw nearer and nearer. Or again it would be like someone delivering a lecture alongside of him, as he lay on his bed listening. At other times two voices would argue before him, discussing at great length subjects that he would find himself repeating on the following day upon the platform or in the pulpit. Sometimes these discussions involved ideas that he had never heard or thought of previously.

He was not, however, puzzled at these strange happenings, and interpreted them as manifestations of the wider faculties of the mind, subjective, mere automatic mental operations. The mind, imbued with given forms of thought, works instinctively on their enlargement, calling on the creative faculties for their more perfect presentation and utterance. It was perhaps an extreme case of the mind becoming its own Guru. Commenting upon these experiences to his more intimate disciples he would remark that they constituted what is regarded as inspiration. Though the Swami described them as subjective experiences, yet, it must be noted that some of the inmates of the same residence would ask him in the morning, "Swami, with whom were you talking last night? We heard you talking loudly and enthusiastically and we were wondering." The Swami would smile at their bewilderment and would answer in an evasive manner which left them mystified. To his disciples he would explain that these incidents betrayed the powers and potentialities of the Self, and denied that there was anything miraculous about them.

During this time and at certain subsequent periods of his stay in the West the Swami felt extraordinary Yoga powers developing spontaneously within him, yet, rarely did he exercise them with determination; in the few cases that he did so, it was only for some grave reason. He could change, if he so wished, the whole trend of the life of any one by a simple touch. He could see clearly things happening at a great distance. Some of the intimate disciples to whom he spoke casually of this fact, prevailed upon him to allow them to test him, in spite of his abhorrence of making a display of psychic powers, and they invariably found his words to be true. On many an occasion his students would find him answering and solving the very doubts and questions that were troubling them at the moment. He could read one's past life and read the contents of one's mind at a glance. Once a wealthy citizen of Chicago chaffed the Swami rather flippantly about his Yogic powers and challenged him to demonstrate them. He said, "Well, sir, if all this which you say be true then tell me something of my mental make-up, or of my past!" The Swami hesitated a moment; then he fixed his eyes upon those of the man as though he would pierce, by some quiet but irresistible power, through the body to the naked soul. The man at once became nervous. His flippancy gave way to sudden seriousness and fear and he exclaimed, "O Swami, what are you doing to me? It seems as if my whole soul is being churned and all the secrets of my life are being called up in strong colours!" The Swami did not consider these powers to be marks of spirituality and never cared to exercise them.

People who had listened for years with increasing dissatisfaction to numerous preachers of modern cults, came to hear him and had their souls aroused and their spiritual hopes fulfilled. His utterances were authoritative, his realisation genuine, he spoke of what he had felt and had himself seen. Those who had knocked long at the doors of wisdom found that through him the gates were opening. And those who had him as their guest at this time would speak of him as a kaleidoscopic genius, enriching his surroundings with a many-sided greatness. It is no wonder that those who came in intimate contact with him would say that he was a soul of unspeakable beauty and grandeur and that he transcended their previous notions of greatness or of saintship.

In September, 1894, finding that his American work had been wilfully misrepresented in Calcutta and that enterprising publishers were printing books of his speeches and sayings in such a way "as to savour of political views," he wrote with vehemence to a disciple in Madras stating:

> "I am no politician or political agitator. I care only for the Spirit. . . . So you must warn the Calcutta people that no political significance be ever attached falsely to any of my writings or sayings. What nonsense! . . . . I heard that the Rev. Kali Charan Banerji in a lecture to the Christian missionaries had said that I was a political delegate. If it was said publicly, then publicly ask the Babu from me, to write to any of the Calcutta papers and prove it, or else take back his foolish assertion. . . . I have said a few harsh words in honest criticism of Christian Governments in general, but that does not mean that I care for, or have any connection with politics. . . . Tell my friends that a uniform silence is all my answer to my detractors. . . . This nonsense of public life and newspaper blazoning has disgusted me thoroughly. I long to go back to the Himalayan quiet."

Only a man of the Swami's calibre could have stood the intensity of his life at this time. It is no wonder, therefore, to find him longing for the retreats and silence of the distant Himalayas.

XXIII

THE BEGINNING OF WORK

It is an exceedingly difficult task to keep up with the Swami in his travels following upon the Parliament of Religions. His lecture tour under the bureau carried him far and wide. But his travels while going about delivering lectures and holding parlour meetings and class talks, on his own account, were even more varied. Within the short time of a year he had visited practically every city of consequence from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River, and had given innumerable lectures, both public and private, the reports of most of which are unfortunately not available now. Wherever he went, he went as a guest. In Detroit he was for about four weeks the guest of Mrs. John J. Bagley, the widow of the ex-Governor of Michigan and a lady of rare culture and unusual spirituality. She often said that during this time the Swami constantly expressed the highest in word and action, and that his presence was a "continual benediction." After leaving Mrs. Bagley, he spent two weeks as the guest of the Hon. Thomas W. Palmer, the President of the World's Fair Commission and formerly a U.S. Senator and the Minister of his country to Spain. When not travelling, or answering invitations coming from all directions, he was frequently the guest of Mr. George W. Hale of Chicago. After giving a series of lectures in the Unitarian Church at Detroit in February, the Swami spent the months of March, April and May of 1894, alternately in Chicago, and New York and Boston. June he spent in Chicago, while during the mid-summer months he delivered a series of lectures at Greenacre in New England, where the "Greenacre Conferences" were being inaugurated and before which he had been asked to speak. Here a group of earnest students gathered round him, and the Swami expounded the Vedânta philosophy as they sat in oriental fashion under a venerable pine tree, since called "The Swami's Pine." These conferences became widely known through the School of Comparative Religions conducted there by the late Dr. Lewis G. Janes, who was long the President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association. Following upon his work in Greenacre, where he left an indelible impression, the Swami visited on invitation various intellectual and society people in the cities and suburbs of Boston, Chicago and New York. In this way he spent the autumn, visiting Baltimore and Washington at the end of October. In November he went to New York again. His previous visits to the city had been only casual, as a guest in the homes of friends. He had given a few public lectures but was not yet in a position to begin regular work. It was at this time that he met Dr. Lewis G. Janes, mentioned above, who was so much struck with his unusual attainments as well as with his message that he invited him at once to give a series of lectures on the Hindu Religion before the Brooklyn Ethical Association. This the Swami accepted. From that time until death separated them he and Dr. Janes were fast friends.

His first lecture in Brooklyn before that Association ensured him immediate success. A large and enthusiastic audience greeted him on that night,—the last night of the year,—to listen to his lecture on Hinduism, "and as the Swami, in his long robe and turban, expounded the ancient religion of his native land, the interest grew so deep that at the close of the evening there was an insistent demand for regular classes in Brooklyn." The Swami acceded, and a series of class meetings were held and several public lectures were given at the Pouch Mansion, where the Ethical Association held its meetings, and elsewhere.

Of his appearance before the Brooklyn Ethical Society, *The Brooklyn Standard* writes:

> " It was the voice of the ancient Rishis of the Vedas, speaking sweet words of love and toleration through the Hindu monk, Paramahamsa Swami Vivekananda, that held spell-bound every one of those many hundreds who had accepted the invitation of the Brooklyn Ethical Society and packed the large lecture hall and the adjoining rooms of the Pouch Gallery on Clinton Avenue to overflowing, on the 31st December, 1894.
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> " . . . . Men of all profession and callings—doctors and lawyers and judges and teachers—together with many ladies, had come from all parts of the city to listen to his strangely beautiful and eloquent defence of the Religion of India. . . .
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> " And they were not disappointed. Swami (i.e., Master or Rabbi or Teacher) Vivekananda is even greater than his fame. . . . He was a splendid type of the famous sages of the Himalayas, a prophet of a new religion combining the morality of the Christians with the philosophy of the Buddhists. . . .
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> " Whatever else may be said of the Swami's lecture or address (for it was spoken extemporaneously), it was certainly intensely interesting. . . . ."

This series of lectures constituted the real beginning of the Swami's work in America. He had already anticipated the serious character of his future activity by breaking away from social invitations and establishing himself in quarters of his own in the city of New York. He was tired and disgusted with the fame he had acquired; and he felt that the interest he had awakened was not what he wanted; to his mind it was too superficial. He desired earnest-minded followers whom he could teach freely, while living independently in a place of his own. For this reason he announced classes and lectures free of charge, himself paying expenses with the money he had gained in his lecturing tours. Many came, some from curiosity, others from earnest sincerity "to learn the ancient teachings of India and the all-embracing character of its philosophy, . . . and, above all, to hear the constant lessons of the Swami on a world-wide universal toleration." Miss S. E. Waldo, of Brooklyn, who became one of the Swami's foremost disciples, and well known under the name of Sister Haridâsi, writes as follows, taking up the thread of her narrative from the time of his lecture before the Ethical Association:

" A few of those who had heard him in Brooklyn now began to go to the place where he lived in New York. It was just an ordinary room on the second floor of a lodging house. The classes grew with astonishing rapidity and as the little room filled to overflowing it became very picturesque. The Swami himself sat on the floor and most of his audience likewise. The marble-topped dresser, the arms of the sofa and even the corner washstand helped to furnish seats for the constantly increasing numbers. The door was left open and the overflow filled the hall and sat on the stairs. And those first classes! How intensely interesting they were! Who that was privileged to attend them can ever forget them! The Swami so dignified yet so simple, so gravely earnest, so eloquent, and the close ranks of students, forgetting all inconveniences, hanging breathless on his every word!

" It was a fit beginning for a movement that has since grown to such grand proportions. In this unpretentious way did Swami Vivekananda inaugurate the work of teaching Vedanta philosophy in New York. The Swami gave his services free as air. The rent was paid by voluntary subscriptions, and when these were found insufficient, the Swami hired a hall and gave secular lectures on India and devoted the proceeds to the maintenance of the classes. He said that Hindu teachers of religion felt it to be their duty to support their classes and the students, too, if they were unable to care for themselves, and the teachers would willingly make any sacrifice they possibly could to assist a needy disciple.

" The classes began in February, 1895, and lasted until June; but long before that time they had outgrown their small beginnings and had removed downstairs to occupy an entire parlour floor and extension. The classes were held nearly every morning and on several evenings in every week. Some Sunday lectures were also given, and there were ' question ' classes to help those to whom the teaching was so new and strange that they were desirous to have an opportunity for more extended explanation."

It is touching to find the Swami teaching Americans of wealth and position, in the fashion of the ancient Gurus. Though they had money, he would not make a single charge. Religion, to his mind, ought to be given free, for it was something not to be bartered but realised. Though it is true that regular classes did not begin until February of the year 1895, yet numbers of visitors flocked to him constantly. The Swami now felt that he was carrying on his message, slowly, perhaps, but surely, in the right way. Formerly he had stood merely in the limelight, which to the superficial mind might mean success. But the Swami knew better, for he had within him the Sannyâsin instinct for sounding the reality and worth of things. He abandoned readily the surroundings and the invitations of persons of wealth and social position for the simple and yet intense life which he deemed necessary for the spread of the cause.

At this time he worked more strenuously than ever; he gave his whole time to teaching by means of talks and lectures, and regularly every day trained some chosen followers how to quiet the mind in the silence of meditation. Teaching his auditors how to meditate he would himself drift into the meditative state, and oftentimes so deeply that he could not readily be brought back to normal consciousness. When the Swami emerged from such states he would feel impatient with himself, for he desired that the Teacher should be uppermost in him, rather than the Yogi. In order to avoid repetitions of such occurrences, he instructed one or two, how to bring him back by uttering a word or a Name, should he be carried by the force of meditation into Samâdhi. Often he would be found singing Sanskrit hymns in gentle tones, or murmuring to himself some of the great Slokas of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He literally radiated spirituality. Indeed, that same atmosphere of ecstasy and insight that hovered about the Master at Dakshineswar, now hovered about the Swami in these strange surroundings in a far-off land. An atmosphere of benediction, of peace, of power and of inexpressible luminosity was felt by one and all who came to his classes.

It is interesting to read the description of the Swami given by the Phrenological Journal of New York. It reads:

> " Swami Vivekananda is in many respects an excellent specimen of his race. He is five feet eight and a half inches in height and weighs one hundred and seventy pounds. His head measures twenty-one and three-fourths inches in circumference by fourteen from ear to ear across the top. He is thus very well proportioned as regards both body and brain. His instincts are too feminine to be compatible with much conjugal sentiment. Indeed, he says himself that he never had the slightest feeling of love for any woman. As he is opposed to war and teaches a religion of unmixed gentleness, we should expect his head to be narrow in the region of the ears at the seat of combativeness and destructiveness, and such is the case. The same deficiency is much marked in the diameters a little farther up at secretiveness and acquisitiveness. He dismisses the whole subject of finance and ownership by saying that he has no property and does not want to be bothered with any. While such a sentiment sounds odd to American ears, it must be confessed that his face, at least, shows more marks of contentment than the visages of Russel Sage, Hetty Green and many others of our multi-millionaires. Firmness and conscientiousness are fully developed. Benevolence is quite conspicuous. Music is well indicated in the width of the temples. The prominent eyes betoken superior memory of words and explain much of the eloquence he has displayed

in his lectures. The upper forehead is well developed at causality and in comparison to which is added a fine endowment of suavity and sense of human nature. Summing up the organisation, it will be seen that kindness, sympathy and philosophical intelligence, with ambition to achieve success in the direction of higher educational work are his predominant characteristics. Being a graduate of the Calcutta University, he speaks English almost as perfectly as if he were a native of England. If he does no more than continue the development of that splendid spirit of charity which was displayed at the World's Fair, his mission among us will certainly prove eminently successful."

Yet, in spite of the appreciation of the beauty of his character and the grandeur of his mission and teaching, the path before the Swami was not a smooth one. With his great veneration for Jesus the Christ, which all who knew him were aware of, it is almost unbelievable that the Swami was continuously persecuted by sectarian and bigoted Christians who, not satisfied with criticising his work and his philosophy, made attacks upon his personal character. Sometimes notes and letters were sent to persons who had invited him to their homes, which declared that the Swami was not what he represented himself to be, and contained all kinds of calumnies against him. Occasionally these notices had the desired effects, and the Swami would find that the doors of his intended hosts were closed to him! But in most instances, the error would be discovered after a time, and they would call and apologise, and become greater friends than ever. So the obstacles he had to face were enormous, keeping him on edge, as it were, constantly. Everywhere he encountered the weighty opposition of sheer ignorance. Some idea of the difficulties may be gleaned from a letter written to the *Brahmavâdin* in the following year by Swami Kripânanda, an American disciple, which is quoted at some length here to show the Swami's mettle.

" The wonderful success which the Swami Vivekananda achieved in spreading the religious and the philosophical ideas of the Hindus in America, may lead one to the erroneous conclusion that this happy result was due to a coincidence of favourable circumstances, rather than to his extraordinary ability. It is only by studying the *fin de siècle* condition of our country, by taking cognisance of the antagonistic forces that had to be coped with, and considering the numerous difficulties to be overcome in this attempt, that we come to fully appreciate the grandeur of the work accomplished, and to realise that the great success accompanying it, is solely due to the personality of the Teacher, to his extraordinary moral, intellectual and spiritual endowments, and to his exceptional energy and will-power.

" It is true that, on the occasion of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, many Indians succeeded in calling the attention of the world to the Light from the East, and caused a wave to pass over our country; but this wave would have died away as quickly as it had come, without leaving any lasting effect, had it not been for the efforts of this one man who unremittingly persisted in grafting the Hindu religious ideas on Western materialism and never rested until his work was crowned with success.

" At the time the American mind was coated with thick layers of superstition and bigotry that had come down from olden times and there was no humbug, no charlatanry, no imposition which had not left there an impress extremely difficult to eradicate. The Americans are a receptive nation. That is why the country is a hot-bed of all kinds of religious and irreligious monstrosities. There is no theory so absurd, no doctrine so irrational, no claim so extravagant, no fraud so transparent, but can find their numerous believers and a ready market. This morbid craving for the abnormal, the occult, the sensational, has practically brought about a revival of the Middle Ages. To satisfy this craving, to feed the credulity of the people hundreds of societies and sects are born for the salvation of the world and to enable the prophets to pocket $25 to $100 initiation fees. Hobgoblins, spooks, Mahatmas and new prophets were rising every day. In this bedlam of religious cranks, in this devil's kitchen of fraud, imposture and knavery, the Swami appeared to teach the lofty religion of the Vedas, the profound philosophy of the Vedanta, the sublime wisdom of the ancient Rishis. The most unfavourable environment for such a task! Before even starting this great mission, it was necessary to first perform the Herculean labour of cleansing this Augean stable of imposture, superstition and bigotry, a task sufficient to discourage the bravest heart, to dispirit the most powerful will. But the Swami was not the man to be deterred by difficulties. Poor and friendless, with no other support than God and his love for mankind, he set patiently to work, determined not to give up until the message he had to deliver would reach the hearts of truth-seeking men and women.

" In the beginning crowds of people flocked to his lectures, consisting partly of curiosity-seekers, partly of the representatives of the cranky and fraudulent elements mentioned before, who thought that they had found in the Swami a proper tool to forward their interests. Most of the latter type of persons tried to induce him to embrace their cause, first by promises of support, and then by threats of injuring him if he refused to ally himself with them. But they were all grievously disappointed. For the first time they had met with a man who could be neither bought nor frightened,— ' the sickle had hit on a stone,' as the Polish proverb says. To all these propositions his only answer was, ' I stand for Truth. Truth will never ally itself with falsehood. Even if all the world should be against me, Truth must prevail in the end.' He denounced fraud and superstition in whatever guise they appeared, and all those untrue and erratic existences hid themselves, like bats at the approach of daylight, in their haunts before this apostle of Truth.

" The methods and tactics of the Christian Missionaries are well known. They would have liked to have the Swami preach Christianity as they understood it, but ' It could not, should not be,' as runs the refrain of the German folk-song. Indifferent to the filthy stories they set in circulation about him, he peacefully continued to preach God and Love and Truth, and their gossip had only advertised his lectures, and gained him the sympathy of all fair-minded people.

" A worthier antagonist, though not commensurate with his strength, he had to meet in another class of people, the so-called Free-thinkers, embracing the atheists, materialists, agnostics, rationalists, and all those who, on principle, are averse to anything that savours of religion. They thought that this Hindu monk was an easy match for them, and that all his theology would be crushed under the weight of Western civilisation, Western philosophy, and Western science. So sure were they of their triumph, that they invited him, in New York, to lecture before their society, anxious to show to their numerous followers how easily religious claims could be refuted by the powerful arguments of their logic and pure reasoning. I shall never forget that memorable evening when the Swami appeared single-handed to face the forces of materialism, arrayed in their heaviest armour of law, and reason, and logic, and common sense, of matter, and force, and heredity, and all the stock phrases calculated to awe and terrify the ignorant. Imagine their surprise and consternation when they found that, far from being intimidated by these big words, he proved himself a master in wielding their own weapons, and as familiar with the arguments of materialism as with those of the Advaita philosophy. He showed them that their much-vaunted Western civilisation consisted principally in the development of the art to destroy their fellow-men, that their Western science could not answer the most vital questions of life and being, that their immutable laws, so much talked of, had no outside existence apart from the human mind, that the very idea of matter was a metaphysical conception, and that it was the much-despised metaphysics upon which ultimately rested the very basis of their materialism. With an irresistible logic he demonstrated that their knowledge proved itself incorrect, not by comparison with knowledge which is true, but by the very laws upon which it depends for its basis ; that pure reasoning could not help admitting its own limitations and pointed to something beyond reason ; and that rationalism when carried to its last consequences must ultimately land us at a something which is above matter, above force, above sense, above thought and even consciousness, and of which all these are but manifestations.

" The powerful effect of this lecture could be seen on the following day, when numbers of the materialistic camp came to sit at the feet of the Hindu monk, and listen to his sublime utterances on God and religion.

" Thus the Swami gathered around himself, from among the most heterogeneous classes of society a large and ever-increasing following of sincere men and women animated with the only desire to pursue truth for truth's own sake.

" This is a delineation of the negative side of the Swami's work. He had first to clear the ground and lay a deep foundation for the grand edifice to be built."

More and more, as time went on, the Swami found himself winning, to a greater and still greater extent, the confidence and the respect, and even the reverence, of large numbers of people in America. Many of these devoted themselves heart and soul to his work and became his followers in a definite sense.

Meanwhile his disciples in India were looking up to him for guidance, sending him numerous letters and even begging him to return to India; to which his reply was that they should depend upon themselves, believe in themselves and "march on." The Swami seemed, in some aspects, to have the strength of a military leader; his letters charging and inciting them to work were always military in character and intensity; and his reprimands and words of encouragement were alike replete with martial enthusiasm. He had no patience with lack of self-confidence and his constant watchword was, "Stand on your own feet!" He wrote, ". . . . if you are really my children you will fear nothing, stop at nothing. You will be like lions. We must rouse India and the whole world. . . ." All his letters to India at this time are filled with this spirit and with a remarkable penetration into the nature of Indian problems. His comments on Christianity, during this period, are also interesting. In a letter he writes as follows, at the very time of the agitation against him by missionary bodies in America, and it is mentioned to show the great generosity and kindly spirit of the Swami:

". . . The Christianity that is preached in India is quite different from what one sees here; you will be astonished to hear that I have friends in this country amongst the clergy of the Episcopal and even Presbyterian churches, who are as broad, as liberal and as sincere, as you are in your own religion. The real spiritual man is broad everywhere. His love forces him to be so. Those to whom religion is a trade, are forced to become narrow and mischievous by their introduction into religion of the competitive, fighting and selfish methods of the world."

When his Indian friends had sent to him the missionary criticism concerning himself and his work, he answered:

" . . . . In future do not pay any heed to what people say either for or against me. . . . I shall work incessantly until I die, and even after death I shall work for the good of the world. Truth is infinitely more weighty than untruth ; . . . It is the force of character, of purity and of truth—of personality. So long as I have these things you can feel easy ; no one will be able to injure a hair of my head. If they try they will fail, sayeth the Lord. . . . "

Probably none other of the Swami's writings are so surcharged with the apostolic fire of his own personality as his letters, and particularly his letters written at this time to his Gurubhais and his Indian devotees. These abound with such fine utterances as the following taken at random:

" . . . . I do not care whether they are Hindus, or Mohammedans or Christians, but those that love the Lord will always command my service.

" . . . . Plunge into the fire and bring people towards the Lord. Everything will come to you if you have faith."

" I always pray for you ; you must pray for me. Let each one of us pray day and night for the down-trodden millions in India who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny,—pray day and night for them. I care more to preach religion to them than to the high and the rich. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. I am poor, I love the poor. . . . . Who feels in India for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out? Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way. Him I call a Mahâtman, whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise, he is a Durâtman. . . . . We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything,—but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect sooner or later. . . . So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! . . . . We are poor, my brothers, we are nobodies, but such have always been the instruments of the Most High."

" I only want men to follow me, who can be true and faithful unto death. I do not care for success or non-success. . . . I must keep my movement *pure*, or I will have none of it."

" India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word Mlechchha and stopped from communion with others."

" An organisation that will teach the Hindus mutual help and appreciation is absolutely necessary."

" . . . . Work among those young men who can devote heart and soul to this one duty—the duty of raising the masses of India. . . . Cultivate the virtue of obedience. . . . . No centralisation is possible unless there is obedience to superiors. No great work can be done without this centralisation of individual forces. . . . Give up jealousy and conceit. Learn to work unitedly for others. This is the great need of our country."

The letters that the Swami sent constantly to India, both to his disciples in Madras and Northern India and to his Gurubhais in the monastery at Baranagore, had almost the same value as his presence. They encouraged all who read them; they made them ambitious to do and to serve; and one finds many of his disciples earnestly devoting themselves, at his bidding, to the carrying out of his plans and ideas. After he started his systematic work in New York, the Swami constantly urged his disciples in Madras to launch a magazine on Vedântic lines. He even helped them to carry out this project by sending them enough money from the proceeds of his secular lectures, and the magazine called *Brahmavâdin* came into existence. He begged them to study the Sanskrit scriptures and gave the following suggestions in a letter from New York dated May 6, 1895, as to the lines on which the journal was to be conducted:

> "Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedânta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedânta philosophy, the Dvaita, the Visishtâdvaita and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Every one is necessary. This is the essential of Religion: The Vedânta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India, is Hinduism. The first stage, *i.e.*, Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe, is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism; the Advaita as applied in its Yoga perception form, is Buddhism. Now, by religion is meant the Vedânta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the Sâktas, Saivas, and others apply it, each, to their own special cult and *forms*. Now, in your journal write article after article on these three systems, showing their harmony as one following after the other, and at the same time avoiding the ceremonial forms altogether. That is, preach the philosophy, the spiritual part, and let people suit it to their own forms. . . . The journal must not be flippant but steady, calm and high toned. . . . Be perfectly unselfish, be steady and work on. . . ."

Thus the Swami was also ushering some work in India and guiding it through letters from distant America. He was preparing a field for himself when he would return back to India. To return to a further consideration of the Swami's work with his classes in New York, the nature of it was largely that of Râja Yoga and Jnâna Yoga. He taught the students the path of practical spirituality by the inner control of the senses, through Râja Yoga, to still the mind, and to subordinate the sense-impulses to reason; in short, to spiritualise the whole personality. Meditation was the key to spirituality and he held regular classes in which the students were taught to concentrate. The

Swami himself spent long hours in meditation, squatting on the ground in the Yogi fashion as in India. Thus the students learnt how to overcome physical consciousness and to realise the potential divinity within them. They learnt that religion was not a question of belief, but of practice, and they began to practise under the Swami's guidance systematically certain spiritual and physical exercises by which equilibrium of the body and the mind could be established.

In order to achieve success, the Swami enjoined on the students the necessity of absolutely pure lives, and of simple Sâttvica food, else grave mental and physical disorders, and even insanity might result. Thus his classes took on the aspect of monastic gatherings, permitting the highest flights of philosophy and spiritual recollectedness. He warned his students against the occult, pointing out that psychic powers were impediments to real spiritual progress, and only diverted one from the right path. The Swami was almost violent in his denunciation of the sects or persons who subordinated spirituality to that grossest of all superstitions, psychic powers. And the Swami put into practice that which he preached. Thus one sees him in his New York retreat, in the morning or the evening quiet, or at dead of night, meditating. Oftentimes he was lost in meditation, his unconsciousness of the external betraying his complete absorption within.

And the Swami was pre-eminently fitted to teach the practices of meditation. Having practised innumerable forms of meditation under the guidance of his Master and possessing a mind informed of all the details and intricacies in the experience of its different states, he was qualified to know the tendency of every disciple and to develop everyone according to his special tendencies, giving every disciple, in accordance with his nature, a special ideal and special form of meditation. His scientific turn of mind gave him a deep insight into the rationale of Yoga exercises; and therefore he could analyse his own experiences and those of his disciples, endeavouring at all times to give a subjective rather than an objective interpretation to the visions and phenomena of meditation; and his counsel was to test everything by reason. Whatever he taught to his disciples he said that he had himself experienced. His theories of the anatomy of the nervous system and of its relation to the brain, his statements as to the relation between states of mind and nervous changes, drew the attention of a great number of noted American physicians and physiologists, some of whom championed his theories, avowing that they contained truths concerning the functions of the body which were worthy of careful investigation. His claim that meditation brought about the extension and development of the human faculties and produced supernormal experiences, hitherto classified as miraculous phenomena, interested the foremost American psychologists, particularly Prof. William James of Harvard University. But his personal disciples were concerned with the spiritual rather than the academic side of religious study, and their efforts at meditation continued unabated.

His lectures at this time were replete with the deepest philosophical insight and with extraordinary outbursts of devotion, revealing his nature as essentially a combination of the Jnâni and Bhakta, the saint and true mystic in one. Sometimes it would seem as if the veils that blind the spiritual vision were rent, and the Swami would stand before his classes a veritable knower of the Self. His hours when not employed in meditation, in private or class teaching, or in replying to various correspondents, were consumed in the pursuit of secular knowledge which he absorbed and turned to spiritual account. The flow of life in the Western world interested him. He was also engaged at this time in penning those immortal thoughts that have become embodied in his now famous work, "Râja Yoga," and which were originally given as class-lectures in his New York centre.

It was some time about June that he completed "Râja Yoga." The manner in which he wrote this is of exceeding interest. His staunch disciple, Miss S. E. Waldo of Brooklyn, was his amanuensis, and she says:

> " It was inspiring to see the Swami as he dictated to me the contents of the work. In delivering his commentaries on the Sutras, he would leave me waiting while he entered deep states of meditation or self-contemplation, to emerge therefrom with some luminous interpretation. I had always to keep the pen dipped in the ink. He might be absorbed for long periods of time and then suddenly his silence would be broken by some eager expression or some long deliberate teaching."

Day after day the Swami was in this constant atmosphere of intense recollectedness and deep intellectual work, teaching Râja Yoga, practising it, writing about it. That the Swami maintained the meditative habit throughout his Western life was remarkable; for the disturbances were innumerable. Oftentimes, whilst those about him were talking vivaciously, it would be noticed that the Swami's eyes would grow fixed, his breath would come slower and slower till there would be a pause and then a gradual return to consciousness of his environment. It is said of him:

> " His friends knew these things and provided for them. If he walked into the house, to pay a call, and forgot to speak; or if he was found in a room, in silence, no one disturbed him, though he would sometimes rise and render assistance to an intruder, without breaking the train of thought. Thus his interest lay within, and not without. To the scale and range of his thought his conversation was of course our only clue."

The Swami had already made ardent admirers and even disciples of many distinguished persons. It was his earnest desire to initiate a few as Sannyâsins, and to train them so that they would be fitted to carry on his American work in his absence. Two had already become "his proclaimed disciples," though they had not as yet received actual initiation into Sannyâs. These were Madame Marie Louise and Herr Leon Landsberg. The description of these two followers of the Swami is best given in *The New York Herald* a few months after they received Sannyâs in the summer of 1895. To quote from the paper:

> " The Swami Abhayananda is a Frenchwoman, but naturalised and twenty-five years resident of New York. She has a curious history. For a quarter of a century she has been known to liberal circles as a materialist, socialist. . . . Twelve months ago she was a prominent member of the Manhattan Liberal Club. Then she was known in the press and on the platform as Mme. Marie Louise, a fearless, progressive, advanced woman, whose boast it was that she was always in the forefront of the battle and ahead of her times.
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> " The second disciple is also an enthusiast. With that skill which Vivekananda shows in all his dealings with men, the Hindu has chosen his first disciples well. The Swami Kripananda, before he was taken into the circle and took the vows of poverty and chastity, was a newspaper man, employed on the staff of one of the most prominent New York papers. By birth he is a Russian Jew, named Leon Landsberg, and, if it were known, his life history is probably as interesting as that of Swami Abhayananda. . . . "

Among others who were devoted to the Swami's teachings were Mrs. Ole Bull, wife of the celebrated violinist and Norwegian nationalist, Dr. Allan Day, Miss S. E. Waldo, Professors Wyman and Wright, Dr. Street, and many clergymen and laymen of note.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett and Miss J. MacLeod, well-known society people of New York, became his most intimate friends and helped him in various ways. The members of the Dixon Society, before which he was invited many times to lecture, became the champions of his ideas. Later on the great electrician, Nicolas Tesla, hearing the Swami's exposition of the Sânkhya philosophy, admitted the superiority of its cosmogony and of its rational theories of the Kalpas (cycles), Prâna and Akâsa, to which, he said, modern science might well look for the solution of cosmological problems. He assured the Swami that he could prove them mathematically. It was at this time that Sarah Bernhardt, the famous French actress, the "Divine Sarah" as she is called, sought an interview with him and expressed her admiration and intense interest in the sublime teachings of the philosophy he so eloquently and so truly represented. Later on Madame Calvè, the celebrated singer, became his ardent devotee.

It would be interesting to give here the reminiscences of Madame Calvè of her first meeting with Swami Vivekananda—and of the profound effect the Swami's teaching produced upon her life:

> "It has been my good fortune and my joy to know a man who truly 'walked with God,' a noble being, a saint, a philosopher and a true friend. His influence upon my spiritual life was profound. He opened up new horizons before me, enlarging and unifying my religious ideas and ideals; teaching me a broader understanding of truth. My soul will bear him eternal gratitude.
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> ". . . . He was lecturing in Chicago one year when I was there; and as I was at that time greatly depressed in mind and body, I decided to go to him, having seen how he had helped some of my friends. An appointment was arranged for me and when I arrived at his house I was immediately ushered into his study. Before going I had been told not to speak until he addressed me. When I entered the room I stood before him in silence for a moment. He was seated in a noble attitude of meditation, his robe of saffron yellow falling in

straight lines to the floor, his head swathed in a turban bent forward, his eyes on the ground. After a pause he spoke without looking up.

" 'My child,' he said, 'What a troubled atmosphere you have about you: Be calm: It is essential.'

"Then in a quiet voice, untroubled and aloof, this man who did not even know my name talked to me of my secret problems and anxieties. He spoke of things that I thought were unknown even to my nearest friends. It seemed miraculous, supernatural.

" 'How do you know all this?' I asked at last. 'Who has talked of me to you?'

"He looked at me with his quiet smile as though I were a child who had asked a foolish question.

" 'No one has talked to me,' he answered gently. 'Do you think that it is necessary? I read in you as in an open book.'

"Finally it was time for me to leave.

" 'You must forget,' he said as I rose. 'Become gay and happy again. Build up your health. Do not dwell in silence upon your sorrows. Transmute your emotions into some form of eternal expression. Your spiritual health requires it. Your art demands it.' "

"I left him, deeply impressed by his words and his personality. He seemed to have emptied my brain of all its feverish complexities and placed there instead his clean and calming thoughts. I became once again vivacious and cheerful, thanks to the effect of his powerful will. He did not use any of the hypnotic or mesmeric influences. It was the strength of his character, the purity and intensity of his purpose that carried conviction. It seemed to me, when I came to know him better, that he lulled one's chaotic thoughts into a state of peaceful acquiescence, so that one could give complete and undivided attention to his words.

"He often spoke in parables, answering our questions or making his points clear by means of a poetic analogy. One day we were discussing immortality and the survival of individual characteristics. He was expounding his belief in reincarnation which was a fundamental part of his teaching. 'I cannot bear the idea,' I exclaimed. 'I cling to my individuality, unimportant as it may be: I don't want to be absorbed into an eternal unity. The mere thought is terrible to me.' 'One day a drop of water fell into the vast ocean,' the Swami answered. 'When it found itself there it began to weep and complain just as you are doing. The great ocean laughed at the drop of water. 'Why do you weep?' It asked. 'I do not understand. When you join me you join all your brothers and sisters, the other drops of water of which I am made. You become the ocean itself. If you wish to leave me you have only to rise up on a sunbeam into the clouds. From there you can descend again, little drop of water, a blessing and a benediction to the thirsty earth.' "

By the month of June, 1895, the Swami had placed his work on a solid foundation. He had constant support from wealthy and influential followers and whatever financial returns he received went towards the further consolidation of his work. Though he was helped, he also helped himself, as has been seen, by giving secular lectures. Not content with the success of his work in America, the Swami as early as August, 1894, meditated a trip to England. He decided that the whole Western world should hear of the glory of the Indian Dharma. Besides his manifold labours and innumerable plans and hopes, he had to make his way constantly explaining himself and his ideas to numerous audiences in which were strangely mingled such opposite types as the hod-carrier and the scientist.

Various moods visited the Swami in the year 1895. This was the year of his hardest work, of his highest hopes, of his greatest endeavours to gain a number of souls of whom he could be sure that they would carry on his work. He went into the very heart of things in his efforts to make some see his vision and become free. He had all manner of plans; he longed, at times, for an organisation that would represent his ideas and his aspirations. Amidst the enormous difficulty of settling himself in a new land, amidst all the strain of propagating new ideas to those who were bred and brought up in a different ideal of life and religion, the Swami in spite of his indomitable will and vigour sometimes felt worried and exhausted. He was at times led to think that all work was but a trap of Mâyâ, but he knew that there was no other object in work except personal purification. Thus one finds him writing to a disciple to say that he had done his best, that he was working out the great Karma that had fallen upon him and that he hoped that the Lord would soon liberate him from the task of preaching. And in one of his epistles he cries out, even as early as January, 1895, "I long, oh, I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees, and my food from begging;" and in another mood, in the latter part of March of the same year, he writes, "That is why I desire so much to have a centre. Organisation has its faults, no doubt, but without that nothing can be done. . . . One must work as the dictate comes from within, and then if it is right and good, society is bound to veer round, perhaps centuries after he is dead and gone. . . ." These words show the spirit of the man, burdened with much affliction, and yet bent on giving his message, bent on working, and yet in the long run indifferent to the fruits. He did not believe in external success. He was truly ready to wait even for centuries.

In the cause of spreading the ideas of the Vedânta, as he himself has said, he was ready to sacrifice everything, even his life. He would work, work, work. But in the very midst of work he would always inwardly rest in the silent and blissful freedom of the life of the true Sannyâsin! He was now in the very rush of the world. He found, however, that even some of his followers, devoted as they might be, interfered unintentionally in the method of carrying out his work. Perhaps some stilted Boston lady would ask him to take elocution lessons, as if he who had shaken the very soul of the Parliament of Religions and was a born teacher of men needed 'elocution lessons.' Another would worry him about *how* to organise; another would say, "Swami, you must do so and so; you must live in better surroundings, and you must be *fashionable* so as to reach and influence society people." At all this the Swami would become fierce with righteous indignation, and exclaim, "Why shall I be bound down with all this nonsense? I am a *monk*, a MONK who has realised the vanity of all earthly nonsense! I have no time to give my manners a finish. I cannot find time enough to give my message. I will give it after my own fashion. Liberty, Mukti, is my religion. I shall never be dictated to. I feel I am guided by the Most High, and as I am guided so shall I do. I don't care for your sort of success. Shall *I* be dragged down into the narrow limits of your conventional life? *Never!*"

In a letter to an esteemed friend the Swami wrote in April: "Miss H— wants me to be introduced to the 'right kind of people.' This is the second edition of the 'hold yourself steady' business, I am afraid. The only 'right sort of people' are those whom the Lord sends—that is what I understand in my life's experience. They alone can and will help me. As for the rest, Lord bless them in a mass and save me from them!" Then the Swami went on to say that, even though he lived in poor quarters the right kind of people did come to him, even she who had criticised him. Then he launched forth in an eloquent appeal to Lord Siva, in which he dedicated himself entirely to the Will of the Lord, writing in his anguish and in his burning love,—"Lord, since a child I have taken refuge in Thee. Thou wilt be with me in the tropics or at the poles, on the tops of mountains or in the depths of oceans. . . . ." And a few days later he writes, ". . . . The less help from man, the more from the Lord." And again, three days later, he writes, "It is the duty of a teacher always to turn out the 'right sort' from the most unrighteous sort of persons. . . . Through the mercy of Ramakrishna my instinct 'sizes up' almost infallibly a human face as soon as I see it. . . ."

The Swami was always grateful for any kindness shown to him. About this time he gave those who had befriended him in his early days in America, rich presents sent to him for this purpose by the Prime Minister of Junagad and the Maharaja of Mysore. Now perhaps it would be a Kashmiri shawl, then a costly Indian carpet, again, a valuable piece of brass or some exquisite silk or muslin. He also wrote to his Indian disciples to send him Rudrâksha beads and Kusâsanas, which he gave to those initiated disciples who were practising regular meditation.

All through 1895 the Swami's work was enormous; he was in the very whirlwind of work; lecturing both privately and publicly, and always at a tension, he began to feel himself wearing out. His nerves were wracked, his brain tired, his whole body exhausted. He longed for a brief period of rest and recuperation. Personally he was satisfied. His message was being kindly received, and he had thousands of disciples, many of whom he never even saw. In his rushing hither and thither over the American continent, he had scattered ideas, and he himself saw that they were being echoed in pulpits and in rostrums, though it might be that he received no credit for them. He was satisfied that the ideals of the Sanâtana Dharma were spreading and percolating through the whole thought world of America. In July, 1895, he wrote to the Maharaja of Khetri that he was bent on preaching, that the more the

Christian Missionaries opposed him, the more determined he was to leave a permanent impression on Christian countries. And he stated that his plan was to initiate some of his followers into Sannyâs and have them continue the work.

To have impressed the entire American nation with a new thought was no easy task. And to have done so within two years of work was all the more wonderful. The Swami had, no doubt, the Divine Power behind him; he had intense sincerity, great ability and unwearying perseverance. Above all, he had Realisation. That was the secret.

Having almost exhausted himself by the uninterrupted work of class and public lecturing, the Swami in the beginning of June, 1895, accepted the invitation of one of his friends and went to Percy, N. H., for a period of rest in the silence of the pine woods. His classes in New York had grown out of all proportions. And yet these classes were to be outdone by the glory and the light of those he was to hold at Thousand Island Park in the immediate future. Before he left for Percy, N. H., his disciples were eager that he should return and continue his work of teaching through the summer months, but being too tired, he demurred to prolonging his work at a tension through the hot weather; besides, many of his students had arranged to leave New York for seaside or mountain resorts.

The problem however solved itself. One of the students owned a small cottage at Thousand Island Park,[1] the largest island in the St. Lawrence River; and she offered the use of it to the Swami and as many of the students as it would accommodate. This plan appealed to the Swami and he agreed to join the students there after a brief visit to the Maine Camp (Percy, N. H.) of one of his friends.

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[1] We are indebted to Miss Waldo for the charming description of the Thousand Island Park and of the Swami's sojourn there.

The Swami said that those students who were willing to put aside all other interests and devote themselves to studying the Vedânta, travelling more than three hundred miles to a suitable spot, were the ones really in earnest, and he should recognise them as disciples. He did not expect many would take so much trouble, but if any responded, he would do his share of helping them on the path.

Miss D., the student to whom the cottage belonged, feeling that a special sanctuary should be prepared for the occasion, built as a true love offering to her Teacher, a new wing that was nearly as large as the original cottage. The place was ideally situated on high ground, overlooking a wide sweep of the beautiful river with many of its far-famed Thousand Islands. Clayton could be dimly discerned in the distance, while the nearer and wider Canadian shores bounded the view to the north. The cottage stood on the side of a hill, which on the north and west sloped down abruptly towards the shores of the river and of a little inlet that like a small lake lay behind the house. The house was literally 'built upon a rock,' and huge boulders lay all around it. The new wing stood on the steep slope of the rocks like a great lantern tower with windows on three sides, three storeys deep at the back, and only two in front. The lower room was occupied by one of the students. The one over it opened out of the main part of the house by several doors, and being large and convenient, became the class-room, where for hours each day the Swami gave the students familiar instruction. Over this room was the one devoted exclusively to the use of the Swami. In order that it might be perfectly secluded, Miss D. had supplied it with a separate outside staircase, although there was also a door opening upon the second storey of the piazza.

The upstairs piazza played an important part in the lives of the students as all the Swami's evening talks were given here. It was wide and roomy, roofed in, and extended along the south and west sides of the cottage. Miss D. had the west side of it carefully screened off by a partition, so that none of the strangers who frequently visited the piazza to see the magnificent view it commanded, could intrude upon their privacy. There, close by his own door, sat the beloved Teacher every evening during his stay and communed with the pupils who sat silent in the darkness, eagerly drinking in his inspired words. The place was a veritable sanctuary. At their feet, like a sea of green, waved the leaves of the tree tops, for the entire place was surrounded by thick woods. Not one house of the large village could be seen, it was as if they were in the heart of some dense forest, miles away from the haunts of men. Beyond the trees spread the wide expanse of the St. Lawrence, dotted here and there with islands, some of which gleamed bright with the lights of hotels and boarding-houses. All these were so far away that they seemed more like a pictured scene than a reality. Not a human sound penetrated their seclusion; they heard but the murmur of the insects, the sweet songs of the birds, or the gentle sighing of the wind through the leaves. Part of the time the scene was illumined by the soft rays of the moon and her face was mirrored in the shining waters beneath. In this scene of enchantment, 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot,' the devoted students spent seven blessed weeks with their beloved Teacher, listening to his words of inspiration.

Immediately after the evening meal each day of their stay, they all repaired to the upper piazza and awaited the coming of the Swami. Nor had they long to wait, for hardly had they assembled ere the door of his room would open and he would quickly step out and take his accustomed seat. He always spent two hours with them and more often much longer. One glorious night, when the moon was about full, he talked to them until she set below the western horizon, apparently as unconscious as the students were of the lapse of time.

Speaking of the Swami and his stay Miss S. E. Waldo, one of the students, writes:

> " To those who were fortunate enough to be there with the Swami, those were weeks of ever-hallowed memory, so fraught were they with unusual opportunity for spiritual growth. No words can describe what that blissful period meant (and still means) to the devoted little band who followed the Swami from New York to the island in the St. Lawrence, who daily served him with joy and listened to him with heart-felt thankfulness. His whole heart was in his work and he taught like one inspired.
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> " Of these talks it was not possible to take notes. They are preserved only in the hearts of the hearers. None of us can ever forget the sense of uplift, the intense spiritual life of those hallowed hours. The Swami poured out all his heart at those times, his own struggles were enacted again before us ; the very spirit of his Master seemed to speak through his lips, to satisfy all doubts, to answer all questioning, to soothe every fear. Many times the Swami seemed hardly conscious of our presence, and then we almost held our breath for fear of disturbing him and checking the flow of his thoughts. He would rise from his seat and pace up and down the narrow limits of the piazza, pouring forth a perfect torrent of eloquence.
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> " The Swami did not appear to address us directly, but rather seemed to be speaking to himself in words of fire, as it were, so intense were they, and so convincing, burning into the very hearts of his listeners, never to be forgotten.
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> Never was he more gentle, more lovable than during

these hours. It may have been much like the way his own great Master taught his disciples, just allowing them to listen to the outpourings of his own spirit in communion with himself.

"It was a perpetual inspiration to live with a man like Swami Vivekananda. From morning till night it was ever the same, we lived in a constant atmosphere of intense spirituality. Often playful and fun-loving, full of merry jest and quick repartee, he was never for a moment far from the dominating note of his life. Everything could furnish a text or an illustration, and in a moment we would find ourselves swept from amusing tales of Hindu mythology to the deepest philosophy. The Swami had an inexhaustible fund of mythological lore and surely no race is more abundantly supplied with myths than those ancient Aryans. He loved to tell them to us and we were delighted to listen, for he never failed to point out the reality hidden under myth and story and to draw from it valuable spiritual lessons. Never had fortunate students greater cause to congratulate themselves on having so gifted a Teacher!

"Those ideas were new and strange to us, and we were slow in assimilating them, but the Swami's patience never flagged, his enthusiasm never waned. In the afternoons he talked to us more informally, and we took usually a long walk.

"By a singular coincidence just twelve students followed the Swami to Thousand Island Park, and he told us that he accepted us as real disciples and that was why he so constantly and freely taught us, giving us his best. All the twelve were not together at once, ten being the largest number present at any one time. Two of our number subsequently became Sannyâsins. . . .

"The ceremony of initiation was impressive from its extreme simplicity. A small altar fire, beautiful flowers and the earnest words of the Teacher alone marked it as different from our daily lessons. It took place at sunrise of a beautiful summer day and the scene still lives fresh in our memories. . . .

"On the occasion of the consecration of the second Sannyâsin, the Swami initiated five of us as Brahmachârins."

It was decided, when they went to Thousand Island Park, that they should live as a community, each doing his or her share of the house-work in order that no alien presence should mar the serenity of the household. The Swami himself was an accomplished cook and often prepared for them delicious dishes.

Every morning, just as soon as the various tasks were over (and often before), the Swami called the students together in the large parlour that served as a class-room and began to teach. Each day he took up some special subject, or expounded from some sacred book, as the Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, or the Vedânta Sutras of Vyâsa.

In these morning lessons the point of view presented was sometimes that of pure dualism as represented by Madhva, while on another day it was that of the qualified non-dualism taught by Râmânuja, known as Visishtâdvaita. Most frequently, however, the monistic commentary of Sankara was taken up; but because of his subtlety he was more difficult to understand, so to the end Ramanuja remained the favourite among the students.

Sometimes the Swami took up the Bhakti Sutras of Nârada. They are a short exposition of devotion to God, which gives one some conception of the lofty Hindu ideal of real, all-absorbing love for the Lord, love that literally possesses the devotee to the exclusion of every other thought.

In these talks the Swami for the first time spoke to them at length about Sri Ramakrishna, of his daily life with the Master and of his struggles with his own tendency to unbelief, which at times drew tears from his Master.

As the days and weeks passed by, the students began to really understand and grasp the meaning of what they heard and they gladly accepted the teaching. Every one of the students there received initiation by Mantra at the hands of the Swami, thus becoming his disciples, the Swami assuming towards them the position of the Guru.

Mrs. Funke speaking of her delightful experience at Thousand Island Park writes as follows:

" We (she and a friend of hers) had no chance to meet him in a personal way at the time (during his first visit to Detroit), but we listened and pondered in our hearts over all that we had heard him say, resolving to find him some time, somewhere, even if we had to go across the world to do it. We lost trace of him completely for one year and a half and thought that probably he had returned to India, but one afternoon we were told by a friend that he was still in this country and that he was spending the summer at Thousand Island Park. We started the next morning, resolved to seek him out and ask him to teach us.

" At last after a weary search we found him. We were feeling very much frightened at our temerity in thus intruding upon his privacy, but he had lighted a fire in our souls that could not be quenched. We must know more of this wonderful man and his teaching. It was a dark and rainy night and we were weary after our long journey, but we could not rest until we had seen him face to face. Would he accept us? And if he did not, what then could we do? It suddenly seemed to us that it might be a foolish thing to go several hundred miles to find a man who did not even know of our existence, but we plodded on up the hill in the rain and darkness, with a man we had hired to show us the way with his lantern. Speaking of this in after years, our Guru would refer to us as ' my disciples, who travelled hundreds of miles to find me and they came in the night and in the rain.' We had thought of what to say to him, but when we realised that we had really found him, we instantly forgot all our fine speeches and one of us blurted out, ' We come from Detroit and Mrs. P. sent us to you.' The other said, ' We have come to you just as we would go to Jesus if He were still on the earth and ask Him to teach us.' He looked at us so kindly and said gently, ' If only I possessed the power of the Christ to set you free now!' He stood for a moment looking thoughtful and then turning to his hostess who was standing near, said, ' These ladies are from Detroit, please show them upstairs and allow them to spend the evening with us.' We remained until late listening to the Master who paid no more attention to us, but as we bade them all good-night we were told to come the next morning at nine o'clock. We arrived promptly, and to our great joy were accepted by the Master and were cordially invited to become members of the household."

In a letter written to a friend at this time she writes:

" So here we are—in the very house with *Vivekananda,* listening to him from 8 o'clock in the morning until late at night. Even in my wildest dreams I could not imagine anything so wonderful, so perfect. To be with Vivekananda! To be accepted by him! . . . .

" Oh, the sublime teaching of Vivekananda! No nonsense, no talk of 'astrals,' 'imps,' etc., but God, Jesus, Buddha. I feel that I shall never be quite the same again for I have caught a glimpse of the Real.

" Just think what it means to listen to a Vivekananda at every meal, lessons each morning and the nights on the porch, the eternal stars shining like 'patines of bright gold!' In the afternoon, we take long walks and the Swami literally, and so simply, finds 'books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good (God) in everything.' And this same Swami is so merry and fun-loving. We just go mad at times.

" Later. We have been soaring on the Heights, since I last wrote you. Swami tells us to forget that there is any Detroit for the present—that is, to allow no personal thoughts to occupy our minds while taking this instruction. We are taught to see God in *everything* from the blade of grass to man—'even in the diabolical man.'

" Really, it is almost impossible to find time to write here. We put up with some inconveniences as it is so crowded. There is no time to relax, to rest, for we feel the time is all too short as the Swami leaves soon for England. We scarcely take time to array ourselves properly, so afraid are we of losing some of the precious Jewels. His words *are* like jewels and all that he says fits together like a wonderfully beautiful mosaic. In his talks he may go ever so far afield but always he comes back to the one fundamental, vital thing—'Find God! Nothing else matters.'

" I especially like Miss Waldo and Miss Ellis, although the whole household is interesting. Some unique characters. One, a Dr. Wright of Cambridge, a very cultured man, creates much merriment at times. He becomes so absorbed in the teaching that he, invariably, at the end of each discourse ends up with asking Swamiji, 'Well, Swami, it all amounts to this in the end, doesn't it? I *am* Brahman, I *am* the Absolute.' If you could only see Swami's indulgent smile and hear him answer so gently, ' Yes, Dokie, you are Brahman, you are the Absolute, in the real essence of your being.' Later, when the learned doctor comes to the table a trifle late, Swami, with the utmost gravity but with a merry twinkle in his eyes, will say, ' Here comes Brahman ' or ' Here is the Absolute.'

" Swamiji's fun-making is of the merry type. Sometimes he will say, ' Now I am going to cook for you!' He is a wonderful cook and delights in serving the ' brithrin.' The food he prepares is delicious but for ' yours truly ' too hot with various spices ; but I made up my mind to eat it if it strangled me, which it nearly did. If a *Vivekananda* can cook for me, I guess the least I can do is to eat it. Bless him!

" At such times we have a whirlwind of fun. Swamiji will stand on the floor with a white napkin draped over his arm, *a la* the waiters on the dining cars, and will intone in perfect imitation their call for dinner,—" Last call fo' the dining cah. Dinner served."—Irresistibly funny. And then, at table, such gales of laughter over some quip or jest, for he unfailingly discovers the little idiosyncrasies of each one—but never sarcasm or malice—just fun.

" Since my last letter to you when I told you of Swamiji's capacity for merriment so many little things have occurred to make one see how varied are the aspects of Vivekananda. We are trying to take notes of all that he says but *I* find myself lost in listening and forget the notes. His *voice* is wondrously beautiful. One might well lose oneself in its divine music. However, dear Miss Waldo is taking very full notes of the lessons and in that way they will be preserved.

" Some good fairy must have presided at our birth—C.'s and mine. We do not, as yet, know much of Karma and Reincarnation but we are beginning to see that both are involved in our being brought into touch with Swamiji.

" Sometimes I ask him rather daring questions, for I am so anxious to know just how he would react under certain conditions. He takes it so kindly when I in my impulsive way sometimes ' rush in where angels fear to tread.' Once he said to some one, ' Mrs. Funke rests me, she is so naive.' Wasn't that dear of him?

" One evening, when it was raining and we were all sitting in the living room, the Swami was talking about pure womanhood and told us the story of Sita. *How* he can tell a story! You *see* it and all the characters become real. I found myself wondering just how some of the beautiful society queens of the west would appear to him—especially those versed in the art of allurement—and before I took time to think, out popped the question and immediately I was covered with confusion. The Swami, however, looked at me calmly with his big, serious eyes and gravely replied, ' If the most beautiful woman in the world were to look at me in an immodest or unwomanly way, she would immediately turn into a hideous, green frog, and one does not, of course, admire frogs!' . . . .

" *Now* he has closed the class for the morning and he has turned to me, ' Mrs. Funke, tell me a funny story. We are going to part soon and we must talk funny things, isn't it?' Alas, he leaves on Monday. . . .

"We take long walks every afternoon and our favourite walk is back of the cottage down a hill and then a rustic path to the river. . . . Sometimes we stop several times and sit around on the grass and listen to Swami's wonderful talks. A bird, a flower, a butterfly, will start him off and he will tell us stories from the Vedas or recite Indian poetry. I recall that one poem started with the line, ' Her eyes are like the black bee on the lotus.' He considered most of our poetry to be obvious, banal, without the delicacy of that of his own country.

" Wednesday, August 7th. Alas, he has departed! Swamiji left this evening at 9 o'clock on the steamer for Clayton where he will take the train for New York and from there sail for England.

" The last day has been a very wonderful and precious one. This morning there was no class. He asked C. and me to take a walk as he wished to be alone with us. (The others had been with him all summer and he felt we should have a last talk.) We went up a hill about half a mile away. All was woods and solitude. Finally he selected a low-branched tree and we sat under the low-spreading branches. Instead of the expected talk, he suddenly said, ' Now we will meditate. We shall be like Buddha under the Bo Tree.' He seemed to turn to bronze, so still was he. Then a thunder-storm came up, and it poured. He never noticed it. I raised my umbrella and protected him as much as possible. Completely absorbed in his meditation, he was oblivious of everything. Soon we heard shouts in the distance. The others had come out after us with raincoats and umbrellas. Swamiji looked around regretfully, for we *had* to go, and said, ' Once more am I in Calcutta in the rains.'

" He was so tender and sweet all this last day. As the steamer rounded the bend in the river, he boyishly and joyously waved his hat to us in farewell and he had departed indeed."

Sister Christine speaking of these days at Thousand Island Park writes:

" All that winter the work went on and when the season came to an end, early in the summer, this devoted group was not willing to have the teaching discontinued. One of them owned a house in Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence River, and a proposal was made to the teacher that they all spend the summer there. He consented, much touched by their earnestness. He wrote to one of his friends that he wanted to manufacture a few " yogis " out of the materials of the classes. He felt that his work was now really started and that those who joined him at Thousand Islands were really disciples. . . . .

" Early in June three or four were gathered at Thousand Island Park with him and the teaching began without delay. We came on Saturday, July 6, 1895. Swami Vivekananda had planned to initiate several of those already there on Monday. ' I don't know you well enough yet to feel sure that you are ready for initiation,' he said on Sunday afternoon. Then he added rather shyly, ' I have a power which I seldom use—the power of reading the mind. If you will permit me, I should like to read your mind, as I wish to initiate you with the others tomorrow.' We assented joyfully. Evidently he was satisfied with the result of the reading, for the next day, together with several others, he gave us a *mantram* and made us his disciples. Afterwards, questioned as to what he saw while he was reading our minds he told us a little. He saw that we should be faithful and that we should make progress in our spiritual life. He described something of what he saw, without giving the interpretation of every picture. In one case, scene after scene passed before his mental vision which meant that there would be extensive travel apparently in

Oriental countries. He described the very houses in which we should live, the people who should surround us, the influences that would affect our lives. We questioned him about this. He told us it could be acquired by anyone. The method was simple at least in the telling. First, think of space,—vast, blue extending everywhere. In time, as one meditates upon this space intently, pictures appear. These pictures must be interpreted. Sometimes one sees the pictures but does not know the interpretation. He saw that one of us would be indissolubly connected with India. Important as well as minor events were foretold for us nearly all of which have come to pass. In this reading the quality of the personality was revealed,—the mettle, the capacity, the character. Having passed this test, there can be no self-depreciation, no lack of faith in one's self. Every momentary doubt is replaced by a serene assurance. Has the personality not received the stamp of approval from the one being in the world . . . . ?

" Of the wonderful weeks that followed, it is difficult to write. Only if one's mind were lifted to that high state of consciousness in which we lived for the time, could we hope to recapture the experience. We were filled with joy. We did not know at that time that we were living in his radiance. On the wings of inspiration, he carried us to the height which was his natural abode. He himself, speaking of it later, said that he was at his best in Thousand Islands. Then he felt that he had found the channel through which his message might be spread, the way to fulfil his mission, for the Guru had found his own disciples. His first overwhelming desire was to show us the path to *Mukti,* to set us free. ' Ah,' he said with touching pathos, ' If I could only set you free with a touch!' His second object, not so apparent perhaps, but always in the undercurrent, was to train this group to carry on the work in America. On his own little veranda, overlooking the tree tops and the beautiful St. Lawrence, he often called upon us to make speeches. It was a trying ordeal. Each in turn was called upon to make an attempt. There was no escape. At these intimate evening gatherings often he soared to the greatest height as the night advanced. What if it was two o'clock in the morning? What if we had watched the moon rise and set? Time and space had vanished for us.

" There was nothing set or formal about these nights on the upper veranda. He sat in his large chair at the end, near his door. Sometimes he went into a deep meditation. At such times we too meditated or sat in profound silence. Often it lasted for hours and one after the other slipped away. For we knew that after this he would not feel inclined to speak. Or again the meditation would be short and he would encourage us to ask questions afterwards, often calling on one of us to answer. No matter how far wrong these answers were, he let us flounder about until we were near the truth and then in a few words, he would clear up the difficulty. This was his invariable method in teaching. He knew how to stimulate the mind of the learner and make it do its own thinking. Did we go to him for confirmation of a new idea or point of view and begin, 'I see it is thus and so,' his 'Yes?' with an upper inflection always sent us back for further thought. Again we would come with a more clarified understanding and again the 'Yes?' stimulated us to further thought. Perhaps after the third time when the capacity for further thought along that particular line was reached, he would point out the error—an error usually due to something in our Western mode of thought. And so he trained us with such patience, such benignity. It was like a benediction.

"It was a strange group—these people whom he had gathered around him that summer at Thousand Islands. No wonder the shopkeeper to whom we went for direction upon our arrival, said, 'Yes, there are some queer people living up on the hill, among whom is a foreign-looking gentleman.' There were three friends who had come to the Swami's New York classes together,—Miss S. E. Waldo, Miss Ruth Ellis, and Doctor Wright. For thirty years, they had attended every lecture on philosophy that they had heard of, but had never found anything that even remotely approached this. So Doctor Wright gravely assured us, the newcomers. . . .

" . . . . We in our retirement seldom saw anyone except now and then someone who came for the view. The conditions were ideal for our purpose. One could not have believed that such a spot could be found in America. What great ideas were voiced there! What an atmosphere was created, what power was generated! There the Teacher reached some of his loftiest flights, there he showed us his heart and mind. We saw ideas unfold and flower. We saw the evolution of plans which grew into institutions in the years that followed. It was a blessed experience—an experience which made Miss Waldo exclaim, 'What have we ever done to deserve this?' And so we all felt.

"The original plan was that they should live as a community, without servants, each doing a share of the work.

Nearly all of them, were unaccustomed to housework and found it uncongenial. The result was amusing, as time went on it threatened to become disastrous. Some of us who had just been reading the story of Brook Farm felt that we saw it re-enacted before our eyes. No wonder Emerson refused to join that community of transcendentalists! His serenity was evidently bought at a price. Some could only wash dishes. One whose work was to cut the bread, groaned and all but wept whenever she attempted the task. It is curious how character is tested in these little things. Weaknesses which might have been hidden for a lifetime in ordinary intercourse, were exposed in a day of this community life. It was interesting. With Swamiji the effect was quite different. Although only one among them all was younger than himself, he seemed like a father or rather like a mother in patience and gentleness. When the tension became too great, he would say with the utmost sweetness, 'Today, I shall cook for you.' To this Lansberg would ejaculate in an aside, 'Heaven save us!' By way of explanation he said that in New York when Swamiji cooked he, Lansberg, would tear his hair, because it meant that afterwards every dish in the house required washing. After several unhappy experiences in the community housekeeping, an outsider was engaged for help, and one or two of the more capable ones undertook certain responsibilities, and we had peace.

"But once the necessary work was over and we had gathered in the class room, the atmosphere was changed. There never was a disturbing element within those walls. It seemed as if we had left the body and the bodily consciousness outside. We sat in a semi-circle and waited. Which gate to the Eternal would be opened for us today? What heavenly vision should meet our eyes? There was always the thrill of adventure. The Undiscovered Country, the Sorrowless Land opened up new vistas of hope and beauty. Even so, our expectations were always exceeded. Vivekananda's flights carried us with him to supernal heights. Whatever degree of realization may or may not have come to us since, one thing we can never forget: We saw the Promised Land. We, too, were taken to the top of Pisgah and the sorrow and trials of this world have never been quite real since.

". . . . When he saw how deep the impression was which he had made, he would say with a smile, 'The cobra has bitten you. You cannot escape.' Or sometimes, 'I have caught you in my net. You can never get out.'

" Miss Dutcher, our hostess, was a conscientious. little woman, a devout Methodist. How she ever came to be associated with such a group as gathered in her house that summer would have been a mystery to anyone who did not know the power of Swami Vivekananda to attract and hold sincere souls. But having once seen and heard him, what could one do but follow? Was he not the incarnation of the Divine, the Divine which lures man on until he finds himself again in his lost kingdom? But the road was hard and often terrifying to one still bound by conventions and orthodoxy in religion. All her ideals, her values of life, her concepts of religion were, it seemed to her, destroyed. In reality, they were only modified. Sometimes she did not appear for two or three days. ' Don't you see ' Swami said, ' this is not an ordinary illness? It is the reaction of the body against the chaos that is going on in her mind. She cannot bear it.' The most violent attack came one day after a timid protest on her part against something he had said in the class. ' The idea of duty is the midday sun of misery scorching the very soul,' he had said. ' Is it not our duty,' she began, but got no farther. For once that great free soul broke all bounds in his rebellion against the idea that anyone should dare bind with fetters the soul of man. Miss Dutcher was not seen for some days. And so the process of education went on. It was not difficult if one's devotion to the Guru was great enough, for then, like the snake, one dropped the old and put on the new. But where the old prejudices and conventions were stronger than one's faith, it was a terrifying, almost a devastating process.

" For the first time we understood why all religions begin with ethics. For without truth, non-injury, continence, non-stealing, cleanliness, austerity, there can be no spirituality. . . .

" Continence-Chastity: This subject always stirred him deeply. Walking up and down the room, getting more and more excited, he would stop before some one as if there were no one else in the room. ' Don't you see,' he would say eagerly, ' there is a reason why chastity is insisted on in all monastic orders?' Spiritual giants are produced only where the vow of chastity is observed. Don't you see there must be a reason? The Roman Catholic Church has produced great saints, St. Francis of Assisi, Ignatius Loyala, St. Theresa, the two Katharines, and many others. The Protestant Church has produced no one of spiritual rank equal to them. There is a connection between great spirituality and chastity. The explanation is that these men and women have through prayer and meditation transmuted the most powerful force in the body into spiritual energy. In India this is well understood and Yogis do it consciously. The force so transmuted is called *Ojas* and is stored up in the brain. It has been lifted from the lowest centre of the *Kundalini,*—the *Mulâdhâr*—to the highest.' To us who listened the words came to our remembrance: ' And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.'

" . . . . How touchingly earnest Swami Vivekananda was as he proposed this subject. He seemed to plead with us as if to beg us to act upon this teaching as something most precious. More, we could not be the disciples he required if we were not established in this. He demanded a conscious transmutation. ' The man who has no temper has nothing to control,' he said. ' I want a few, five or six who are in the flower of their youth.' . . . .

" It is needless to repeat the formal teaching, the great central idea. These one can read for himself. But there was something else, an influence, an atmosphere charged with the desire to escape from bondage—call it what you will—that can never be put into words, and yet was more powerful than any words. It was this which made us realise that we were blessed beyond words. To hear him say, ' This indecent clinging to life,' drew aside the curtain for us into the region beyond life and death, and planted in our hearts the desire for that glorious freedom. We saw a soul struggling to escape the meshes of Mâyâ, one to whom the body was an intolerable bondage, not only a limitation but a degrading humiliation. '*Azad, Azad,* the Free,' he cried, pacing up and down like a caged lion. Yes, like the lion in the cage who found the bars not of iron but of bamboo. ' Let us not be caught this time ' would be his refrain another day. . . .

" We seemed to be in a different world. The end to be attained was Freedom—freedom from the bondage in which Mâyâ has caught us, in which Mâyâ has enmeshed all mankind. Sooner or later the opportunity to escape will come to all. Ours had come. For these days every aspiration, every desire, every struggle was directed towards this one purpose—consciously by our Teacher, blindly, unconsciously by us, following the influence he created."

Wednesday, June 19, marked the beginning of the regular teaching given daily by the Swami to his group of disciples at Thousand Island Park. He came on this first morning with the Bible in his hand and opened it at the Book of John, saying that since the students were all Christians, it was proper that he should begin with the Christian Scriptures. With August 6, ended these beautiful lessons and on the following day he left for New York.

Though all the talks of the Swami during his stay at Thousand Island Park were not written down, some were, and these have been embodied in book-form, known as *Inspired Talks.* It is to Miss Waldo that the followers of the Swami are indebted for these immortal words and the title of the book has been well-chosen, for they were indeed inspired. The Swami threw light upon all manner of subjects, historical and philosophical, spiritual and temporal. It was as if the contents of his nature were pouring themselves forth as a grand revelation of the many-sidedness of the Eternal Truth. Certainly the seven weeks at the Thousand Island Park were one of the freest and the greatest periods in the Swami's life. He was there in the uninterrupted stillness of the island retreat, in an atmosphere similar to that in which his Master had lived and taught in the Dakshineswar days of old. And there on the banks of the St. Lawrence, in a mood of supreme ecstasy, one day, he entered while meditating into the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi as he had done in the days of blessed memory at Cossipore. Though at the time he spoke of it to no one he reckoned this experience as one of the most exalted in his life. The whirlwind of spiritual rhapsody and ecstasy that had swept the souls of devotees in Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganges, swept here anew the souls of other devotees in the island retreat of the beautiful St. Lawrence river, and the spirit of the Master and the realisation of the Swami burned constantly in vast, ignorance-destroying flames.

Just before leaving New York for Thousand Island Park the Swami had received an invitation to visit the Greenacre Conferences, but he declined. The reason of this one finds in a letter written to a friend in which he says that he intends "to manufacture a few Yogis out of the materials of the classes and a busy fair like Greenacre is the last place for that." Therefore he had decided to go to the St. Lawrence retreat. For his work at Thousand Island Park, his short stay at Percy, New Hampshire, evidently fitted him. There in the silence of the pines he read the Gita, meditated alone in the stillness of the forest for hours and days together. His one idea was to be by himself in communion with the Highest; and therefore it was little wonder that he came forth from the solitude a very avalanche of spirituality, making his disciples realise many forms of Truth at but a glance or touch or wish.

. In the autumn of 1895, following upon his Thousand Island work, the Swami is seen writing to Swami Abhayânanda concerning organisation. Dissatisfied with those who mistook what he meant by the term organisation in his letter, and who did not catch the spirit, thinking, perhaps, that he wanted to "make a success" of his work, he wrote:

> "We have no organisation, nor want to build any. Each one is quite independent to teach, quite free to preach whatever he or she likes.
>
> "If you have the spirit within, you will never fail to attract others. . . .
>
> "Individuality is my motto. I have no ambition beyond training individuals. I know very little ; that little I teach without reserve ; where I am ignorant I confess it as such, . . . I am a Sannyâsin. As such I hold myself as a servant, not as a master in this world."

And he adds that whether people love him or hate him, they all are alike welcome. He says that he seeks no help, nor rejects any, that he has no right to be helped and that if he is helped by others it is their mercy. He avers that when he became a Sannyâsin he did so with his whole mind, welcoming anything, even starvation and the utmost misery.

Gradually his disciples came to understand his ideal. Possessed with the Western consciousness of the necessity of external organisation, it took some time for them to see that what he desired was a spiritual rather than a temporal organisation, a union of noble, pure, persevering and energetic souls, bent on personal realisation and moved to work by a genuine interest and love for humanity. He had carried on his work in this spirit, and already it had assumed large proportions. In a letter to a distinguished Indian he said, in the glory of his realisations at the Thousand Island Park, "I am free, my bonds are cut, what care I whether this body goes or does not go? . . . I have a truth to teach, I, the child of God. And He that gave me the truth will send me fellow-workers from the Earth's bravest and best." Now and then the MONK would come out in protest against his surroundings and distractions. His poem, "The Song of the Sannyâsin," considered by some to be his masterpiece, was written in a state of spiritual fervour and in protest to one who interfered with his life, trying to dictate terms to him. He had received a letter, criticising his determination to work among the people instead of among the rich; and as an answer he sent back by return mail, "The Song of the Sannyâsin." Three verses selected from this poem afford an insight into the ardour and the power of the Swami's spirit of Sannyâs and of his realisation.

Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore ;
Love, hate—good, bad—and all the dual throng.
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free ;
For fetters though of gold, are not less strong to bind ;
Thus be thou calm, Sannyâsin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

*

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down ;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame ; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser, praised, and blamer, blamed are,—one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyâsin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

*

Few only know the Truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one ; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Mâyâ's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyâsin bold! Say—
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

XXIV

THE FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND

Having fulfilled his great work of training and initiating disciples at Thousand Island Park, the Swami returned to New York, where he made preparations to sail for England. He had long held the idea of going to London as a missionary of Hinduism and had been invited by Miss Henrietta Muller to be her guest. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, hearing that he was coming wrote a cordial letter asking him to come and live with him. He assured him that there was a great field for his work in London and that he would do everything in his power to help the work on. One of the Swami's New York friends invited him to join him in a tour to Paris and to England. Seeing that things were opening up for him he seized this opportunity to carry to England and to the English people that same great message which he had preached in America and which had aroused the foremost thinkers and representatives of American life and culture to a new order of thought and to a new spiritual outlook.

The Swami needed rest, and he thought that an ocean voyage would be a restorative to tired nerves and an exhausted brain. Therefore, in the middle of August, he sailed from New York, reaching Paris in the latter part of the month. The trip delighted him; now he was in Paris, the centre of European culture. He made the most of his brief stay by visiting its museums, its churches, its cathedrals, its art galleries, and was pleased to see how highly the artistic instincts of the French nation were developed. He was introduced to some of the enlightened friends of his host, with whom he discoursed on subjects which ranged from the highest spiritual to the most learned studies. They became his friends and enjoyed his company, for in himself he was historian, philosopher, wit and entertainer. As was his custom everywhere, in his short stay in Paris he acquired as much information as possible, asking, studying, and observing the culture of the West.

But even though he came to Paris for recreation, thoughts of work crossed his mind. Just before sailing from America he had received a letter from his disciples in India, warning him that missionary activity was strong against him in his native land and that articles and pamphlets were appearing, criticising his life, his teaching and his conduct. Evidently the missionaries had been criticising his diet in the West and many of the Hindus who had read this became opposed to the Swami and attacked him in strong terms. Naturally he was vexed, and so he writes from Paris on the day previous to his departure for London, to say:

" . . . . I am surprised you take the missionaries' nonsense so seriously. . . . If the people in India want me to keep strictly to my Hindu diet, please tell them to send me a cook and money enough to keep him. This silly *bossism* without a mite of real help makes me laugh. On the other hand, if the missionaries tell you that I have ever broken the two great vows of the Sannyâsin,—chastity and poverty,—tell them that they are *big liars*. . . .

" As for me, mind you, I stand at nobody's dictation. I know my mission in life, and no chauvinism about me ; I belong as much to the world as to India, no humbug about that. . . . What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave? . . .

" . . . . I *see* a greater Power than man, or God, or devil, at my back. I require nobody's help. I have spent all my life helping others. . . .

> " Do you mean to say I am born to live and die one of those caste-ridden, superstitious, merciless, hypocritical, atheistic *cowards,* that you find only amongst the educated Hindus? I hate cowardice, I will have nothing to do with cowards or political nonsense. I do not believe in any politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, everything else is trash. . . . "

This letter, written on September 9, shows the Swami in a strong light. By this time missionary activity against the Swami had reached a high pitch. But the Swami was a strong man, and he could be a strong adversary when necessary. He had to be this, for otherwise his religion, his people, his name and his teaching would have been overthrown by cynical or malicious critics. He had literally to fight his way for recognition. And when his character was attacked, he was, for the sake of his teaching, unequivocal in his replies. Oftentimes, however, the Swami felt like a child, and he would weep in solitude, praying to the Mother for protection and for help. On one occasion, during his early days in America, he was actually seen in tears reading a baseless assertion against his character, and when asked the reason he replied: "Oh! How deep is the wickedness of the world and to what lengths men go, in the name of religion, to cast aspersion upon another worker in God's vineyard!" Even many of the Christian clerics were up in arms against the bigoted and slanderous statements which so-called Christian propagandists were heaping upon one whom every fair-minded Christian called "Our Eastern Brother."

Now he was bound for England! He was filled with expectations and anticipation. In America he had often dreamt of visiting the great metropolis of London. He wondered how the British public would receive him—a Hindu belonging to a subject race, come to preach his religion to them. But this wonder was shortly to give place to a still greater wonder—namely, his unbounded and immediate success. He was received by friends, among them being Mr. Sturdy, and Miss Henrietta Muller whom he had met in America. He soon found himself accommodated now in one and then in another of the homes of his friends. After a few days' rest he commenced work in a quiet way. During the day he paid visits to every place of historic or artistic interest, in the mornings and often in the late evenings he held classes and gave interviews. His reputation spread at once. Visitors poured in. He received numerous invitations; and within three weeks of his arrival he found himself engaged in strenuous work. He was interviewed by several of the leading journals, among them being *The Westminster Gazette,* and *The Standard* which spoke of him and of his teaching in highly complimentary terms.

The Swami's work, though intended to be mostly of a private character, soon assumed a public aspect, as the notices incorporating his teaching, that appeared from time to time in the daily journals, attest. People came in numbers to meet the Hindu Yogi, as he was called in London. One of the Swami's great friends at this time who introduced him to numerous persons and immensely assisted him in forming his classes and propagating the Vedânta teaching was Mr. E. T. Sturdy, a man who had long been interested in Indian thought and, indeed, had been in India and undergone severe asceticism in a hill-station in the Himalayas. He was a man of means and learning and position, and his name lent weight among the circle of his friends who went to the Swami's classes. Among the early visitors to the Swami's class-rooms was Lady Isabel Margesson and several of the nobility.

The Swami worked day in and day out, even as he had done in New York, without respite, giving his whole spirit to those who came to be taught.

Feeling that the London public should hear his philosophy expounded to them, his friends arranged to have him give a public lecture at Princes' Hall, Piccadilly, one of the most fashionable places in the metropolis, on the evening of October 22. And here the Swami delivered his address on "Self-Knowledge." When he rose to speak that night, he faced a large gathering of people, representing all walks of life and some of the best thinkers in London. The lecture was a tremendous success, and the next morning the journals were filled with complimentary comments. *The Standard* wrote:

> " Since the days of Ram Mohan Roy, with the single exception of Keshub Chundra Sen, there has not appeared on an English platform a more interesting Indian figure than the Hindu who lectured in Princes' Hall. . . . In the course of his lecture, he made some remorselessly disparaging criticism on the work that factories, engines, and other inventions and books were doing for man, compared with half-a-dozen words spoken by Buddha or Jesus. The lecture was evidently quite extemporaneous, and was delivered in a pleasing voice free from any kind of hesitation."

The London Daily Chronicle wrote:

> " Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk, whose physiognomy bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of Buddha, denounced our commercial prosperity, our bloody wars, and our religious intolerance, declaring that at such a price the mild Hindu would have none of our vaunted civilisation."

Under the title, "An Indian Yogi in London," *The Westminster Gazette* wrote, following upon an interview of one of its correspondents with the Swami:

> " . . . . The Swami Vivekananda is a striking figure with his turban (or mitre-shaped cap) and his calm but kindly

features. . . . His face lights up like that of a child, it is so simple, straightforward and honest."

This interviewer held a long discussion with the Swami wherein the latter told him why he had renounced the world and adopted the Sannyâsin life. The Swami mentioned the name of his Master, and said that he had come to organise no sect, to teach no sectarian doctrine, but to give the general outlines of the universal principles of the Vedânta and to let each apply them to his own concrete forms. He said, "I am the exponent of no occult societies, nor do I believe that good can come of such bodies. Truth stands on its own authority, and truth can bear the light of day." The correspondent of the *Gazette* wrote of all the Swami's ideas and of his brilliant success in America, and concluded by remarking, "I then took my leave from one of the most original of men that I have had the honour of meeting." Thus the London public were informed of the Swami's being a monk and a teacher, and scores gathered at his quarters, seeking instruction, or desiring to satisfy their curiosity.

It was a novel and satisfying experience for the Swami to have the English people endorse his teaching and his character by this demonstration of enthusiasm. And though his stay in London was hardly more than a month from this lecture, he succeeded in making a deep and lasting impression upon those whom he met. Among these was Miss Margaret Noble, who later on was known as Sister Niveditâ. She was struck with the novelty and the breadth of his religious culture and the intellectual freshness of his philosophical outlook, as also with the fact that "his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man." Both before she met him, and for some time after, Miss Noble was highly interested in educational work, being the Principal of a school of her own, and was one of the conspicuous members of the Sesame Club, founded for the furtherance of educational purposes. She moved in quiet but distinguished intellectual circles and was deeply interested in all modern influences and thought. She weighed the Swami's words in the balance and at first found some difficulty in accepting his views; but this, in the Swami's eyes, was a sign of the power of true penetration, for he knew that though now she might hesitate, when she would once accept, there would be no more ardent champion of his ideas than she. It required many months, she herself confesses, for her to accept the Swami's philosophy *in toto*.

Miss Noble pondered for a long time upon the Swami's words; and before he left England for America she already called him "Master." The description of her first meeting with the Swami is charming. She writes:

> " Even in far away London indeed, the first time I saw him, the occasion must have stirred in his mind, as it does in mine, recalling it now, a host of associations connected with his own sun-steeped land. The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place, it is true, a West-end drawing-room. But he was seated, facing a half-circle of listeners, with the fire on the hearth behind him, and as he answered question after question, breaking now and then into the chanting of some Sanskrit text in illustration of his reply, the scene must have appeared to him, while twilight passed into darkness, only as a curious variant upon the Indian garden, or on the group of hearers gathered at sundown round the Sâdhu who sits beside the well, or under the tree outside the village-bounds. Never again in England did I see the Swami as a teacher, in such simple fashion. Later, he was always lecturing, or the questions he answered were put with formality by members of larger audiences. Only this first time we were but fifteen or sixteen guests, intimate friends, many of us, and he sat amongst us, in his crimson robe and girdle, as one bringing us news from

a far land, with a curious habit of saying now and again 'Siva! Siva!' and wearing that look of mingled gentleness and loftiness, that one sees on the faces of those who live much in meditation, that look, . perhaps, that Raphael has painted for us, on the brow of the Sistine Child.

" That afternoon is now ten years ago, and fragments only of the talk come back to me. But never to be forgotten are the Sanskrit verses that he chanted for us, in those wonderful Eastern tones, at once so reminiscent of, and yet so different from, the Gregorian music of our own churches."

In the many talks and private lectures which the Swami gave in some of the aristocratic houses and before several clubs during his first stay in London, he invariably discoursed on the important tenets of the Hindu Faith, and especially of the Vedânta philosophy. As in America, so here also in his London conversaziones, he found himself besieged with questions of various character, and invariably he was the same brilliant wit and master of repartee and spiritual teacher. He would oftentimes express his lack of confidence in the Western conception of religious organisation and its love of, and dependence upon money, as opposed to the Hindu idea of absolute freedom in religious belief and pursuits and its glorification of Renunciation.

The lectures and talks of the Swami were sometimes thrilling and always illuminating in their character. Probably no other instance sets forth his eloquence and spirit more clearly than that which occurred in a West-end drawing-room where he lectured one evening to a highly cultured audience, composed mostly of fashionable young mothers. He was speaking on the greatness of the path of Love, showing to what heights of selflessness it leads and how it draws out the very best faculties of the soul. In elucidating his remarks, he said, "Suppose, a tiger should suddenly appear before you in the streets.

How terror-stricken you would be, and how eager you would all be to fly away for your very lives! But"—and his tone became changed and his face of a sudden lighted up with that strength and fearlessness which the spiritual fire alone endows in its fullest measure,—"suppose, there were a baby in the path of the tiger! Where would your place be then? At the mouth of the tiger—any one of you—I am sure of it." His hearers were carried away by this splendid remark, at once a compliment to the possibilities within them and with the power of arousing their very highest spiritual nature. It was such characteristics as these—his immense personal magnetism, his directness, his lucidity, his vision,—which gave convincing power to his utterances, and which bound indissolubly to himself, here, there and everywhere, large groups of the very finest and the most devout disciples. The remarkable way in which he classified religious ideas, the great breadth of his intellectual and spiritual culture, the newness and profundity of his ideas, the great ethical import attached to all he said, and, finally, his strength, manliness and fearlessness of spirit, each and all of these were bound to create an indelible impression.

In his first visit to London was laid an unshakable foundation for any future work he might find it fit to initiate. When he intended to visit England he thought it would be "only to feel the ground;" but when he was once there he found that his visit was not experimental but practically and immensely successful, beyond all anticipation. The Press had welcomed and heralded his ideas; some of the most select clubs of the city and even some leaders of its prominent clerical institutions had invited him and received him with marked admiration. He was moving in the best circles of English society and even members of the nobility were glad to reckon him as their friend. This completely revolutionised his idea of English men and women. In America he found that the public was most enthusiastic and responsive in taking up new ideas; but in England he discovered that though his hearers were more conservative in their declarations of acceptance and praise, they were all the more fervent and staunch, once they had convinced themselves of the worth of a teacher and his ideas. Before he left London to return to America and take up the threads of work there, he had the joyous satisfaction of being able to count many as his sincere friends and earnest supporters. In the middle of November he himself wrote to a disciple in Madras, saying:

> " . . . In England my work is really splendid. . . . Bands and bands come and I have no room for so many ; so they squat on the floor, ladies and all. . . . I shall have to go away next week, and they are so sorry. Some think my work here will be hurt a little if I go away so soon. I do not think so. I do not depend on men or things. The Lord alone I depend upon—and He works through me.
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> " . . . . I am really tired from incessant work. Any other Hindu would have died if he had to work as hard as I have to. . . . I want to go to India for a long rest. . . . "

A correspondent of a daily journal, who attended the class lectures of the Swami writes:

> " It is indeed a rare sight to see some of the most fashionable ladies in London seated on the floor cross-legged, of course, for want of chairs, listening with all the Bhakti of an Indian *chela* towards his Guru. The love and sympathy for India that the Swamiji is creating in the minds of the English-speaking race is sure to be a tower of strength for the progress of India."

In the very midst of his English work, however, the Swami was receiving many letters, saying that the opportunity for American work was on the increase, and begging him to return to America for the sake of his disciples there. His English friends, on the other hand, were urging him to remain and to settle permanently in the metropolis. But he thought it would be best to give the seeds sown in London time to germinate. Besides, he felt that he was being called by the Lord. He promised to return to England in the following summer and continue the work begun there. He was gratified with what he said the Lord had accomplished through him and with a new spirit and renewed enthusiasm he turned his face again to the group of ardent followers in America. A rich Boston lady had promised to support his work throughout the coming winter in New York, and everything seemed bright and prosperous. Before he left he advised those who were more particularly interested in his teaching to form themselves into a body and to meet regularly for the purpose of reading the Bhagavad Gita, and other Hindu Scriptures. Mr. E. T. Sturdy, writing to the *Brahmavâdin*, in the month of February, 1896, of the Swami's visit to England, says:

> "The visit of the Swami Vivekananda to England has demonstrated that there exists a thoughtful, educated body of people here, which has only to be found and properly approached, to benefit very largely from the life-giving stream of Indian thought. . . .
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> ". . . . Again, from Pulpit utterances, making reference to Swami Vivekananda's expositions here, it was not difficult to see how, through him, some of the more open-minded of the Western clergy, who were fortunate enough to meet him, were able to make application, to their own system of religion, of pure Vedânta teachings. . . . Swami Vivekananda's classes drew together considerable numbers from the various ranks of English life. The great majority of these carried away with them a clear conviction of his capacity as a teacher. Upon his return to America, in order to keep together the introductory work thus accomplished, classes were set on foot for the reading and study of the Bhagavad-Gitâ and other kindred subjects. . . . These classes continue. . . .

No introduction is needed. . . . . No society is formed, or will be formed, nor is any money consideration accepted. . . . "

The Swami's success was due to his great art of presenting the supreme insight which he possessed. The above writer has expressed it well when, speaking of the Swami's coming, he says in continuation, ". . . But at length arrives on our shores a Yogin coming with love in his heart and the tradition of ages in his memory. . ." In the course of a single interview he would often present to the audience a series of new ideas for the basis of a broad and all-inclusive spiritual life. In some instances literally an intellectual upheaval was created by his profound remarks on the metaphysics of the Vedânta; and many of his hearers admitted that it had never before fallen to their lot to meet with a thinker who in one short hour was able to express all that was the very highest in the way of religious thought.

XXV

ESTABLISHING THE AMERICAN WORK

During the Swami's absence in England, the work of spreading the Vedânta was successfully carried on by his disciples, notably by Swamis Kripananda and Abhayananda, and by Miss S. E. Waldo. They not only held regular weekly meetings on the Vedânta philosophy in New York which were well-attended, but carried the Swami's message to other cities of the Union. Everywhere they found a ready hearing and succeeded in forming new centres, such as at Buffalo and Detroit, where earnest truth-seekers continued the work with zeal and devotion. After three months' absence the Swami arrived at New York in excellent health and spirits on Friday, December 6. His visit to England and his energetic work there, though a strenuous experience, had been most pleasant. Together with Swami Kripananda, he now made his headquarters in Thirty-ninth Street. They occupied two spacious rooms which could accommodate as many as one hundred and fifty persons. The lady who had promised him help was hindered in giving it. But the Swami did not depend on men and things for his success. He set himself to the task of teaching Karma Yoga in particular, and gave all those lessons that are embodied in the book known as "Karma Yoga," which is regarded by some as his masterpiece. For two weeks he worked incessantly, giving as many as seventeen class lectures a week, besides carrying on a voluminous correspondence and granting numerous private audiences. The subjects of some of the lectures given at this time were (1) The Claims of Religion: Its Truth and Utility. (2) The Ideal of a Universal Religion: How It Must Embrace Different Types of Minds and Methods. (3) The Cosmos: The Order of Creation and Dissolution. (4) Cosmos (continued).

The disciples of the Swami were eager from the first to have his extempore lectures recorded, as he made no effort to preserve his own teachings. Therefore towards the end of the year 1895, a stenographer was engaged to report his lectures. But it was found that he could not keep up with the Swami; it was difficult for him to do so, especially because of his lack of familiarity with the subjects. Another was engaged with the same results. Finally, through some strange chance, one J. J. Goodwin, who had recently come to New York from England was engaged; and the result was surprising. He transcribed exactly and accurately all the utterances of the Swami. A man of the world, with a variegated experience, he forsook the worldly life and all worldly pursuits almost from the moment his eyes fell upon the Swami. The Swami told him many incidents of his past life, and this created such a moral revolution in him that thenceforth his whole life was changed. He became a most ardent disciple, even to the point of attending to the Swami's personal needs. He would work day and night over the Swami's lectures, taking them down stenographically and then typewriting them, all in the same day, in order to hand over the manuscripts to the newspapers for publication and to be prepared for the same work on the day following. The Swami prized "my faithful Goodwin" as he was wont to speak of him, and Goodwin accompanied him wherever he went, visiting Detroit and Boston, when the Swami went to those places in the spring of the year 1896, and later accompanying him to England and even to India, where he died. At his demise the Swami was heard to remark, "Now my right hand is gone. My loss is incalculable." It may be said here that the Swami was comparatively little given to writing. He spoke freely and always extempore and therefore, with the exception of his work on "Râja Yoga," he has left behind him little philosophical writing in his own hand.

Towards the end of the month the Swami took advantage of the Christmas holidays to pay a visit to Boston, as the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull. Returning from there he at once commenced in New York a series of stirring free public lectures at Hardeman Hall, on Sundays, beginning January 5. His lectures before the Metaphysical Society in Brooklyn and the People's Church in New York drew crowds of listeners and were highly appreciated. Besides these public lectures he continued to hold his private classes twice daily, the attendance at which was increasing beyond all expectations. Those who came to the public lectures came also to the Vedânta headquarters; and oftentimes there was not even standing room in Hardeman Hall, when the Swami spoke. He was called the "lightning orator," and soon his fame as a public lecturer in New York spread so widely that it was deemed wise to rent Madison Square Garden, a huge hall, with a seating capacity of over fifteen hundred, for the second series of lectures which he gave in February. The subjects were "Bhakti Yoga," "The Real and the Apparent Man," and "My Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa." In February, he was invited to lecture before the Metaphysical Society at Hartford, Conn.; he accepted, and spoke on "Soul and God." Of this lecture the *Hartford Daily Times* wrote: His lectures are more in consonance with those of Christ than those of many so-called Christians. His broad charity takes in all religions and all nations. The simplicity of his talk last night was charming.

In February he also lectured before the Ethical Society of Brooklyn. His lectures aroused everywhere an enormous wave of enthusiasm and *The New York Herald*, the leading paper of New York, mentioning the character of the Swami's work, in the latter part of January, 1896, said:

> " Swami Vivekananda is a name to conjure with in certain circles of New York society today—and those not the least wealthy or intellectual. It is borne by a dusky gentleman from India, who for the last twelve months has been making name and fame for himself in this metropolis by the propagation of certain forms of Oriental religion, philosophy and practice. Last winter his campaign centred in the reception room of a prominent hotel on Fifth Avenue. Having gained for his teaching and himself a certain vogue in society, he now aims to reach the common people and for [illegible] reason is giving a series of free lectures on Sunday afternoons at Hardeman Hall.
>
> " Sufficient success has attended the efforts [illegible] Swami Vivekananda. . . . Of his early life he never speaks, [illegible] to talk in a general way about the great Master who taught [illegible] the doctrines and practices he is now trying to introduce [illegible] this country.
>
> " . . . . His manner is undoubtedly attractive, and he [illegible] possessed of a large amount of personal magnetism. One has but to glance at the grave, attentive faces of the men and women who attend his classes to be convinced that it is not the man's subject alone that attracts and holds his disciples. . . . "

The New York Herald reporter, after giving a description of the Swami and his work in the United States continues as follows:

> " When I visited one of the Swami's classes recently, I found present a well-dressed audience of intellectual appearance. Doctors and lawyers, professional men and society ladies were among those in the room.

"Swami Vivekananda sat in the centre, clad in an ochre-coloured robe. The Hindu had his audience divided on either side of him and there were between fifty and a hundred persons present. The class was on Karma Yoga. . . .

"Following the lecture or instruction, the Swami held an informal reception, and the magnetism of the man was shown by the eager manner in which those who had been listening to him, hastened to shake hands or begged for the favour of an introduction. But concerning himself the Swami will not say more than is absolutely necessary. Contrary to the claim made by his pupils, he declares that he has come to this country alone and not as officially representing any order of Hindu monks. He belongs to the Sannyâsis, he will say, and is hence free to travel without losing his caste. . . ."

Describing the Swâmi's personality at this time, Helen Huntington wrote to the *Brahmavâdin* from Brooklyn:

". . . . But it has pleased God to send to us out of India a spiritual [illegible]—a teacher whose sublime philosophy is slowly and surely [illegible]ting the ethical atmosphere of our country; a man [illegible] [illegible]ary power and purity, who has demonstrated [illegible] very high plane of spiritual living, a religion of [illegible] [illegible]ntailing charity, self-renunciation, and the purest ser[illegible] [illegible]nceivable by the human intellect. The Swami [illegible] has preached to us a religion that knows no [illegible] creed and dogmas, is uplifting, purifying, infinitely [illegible]ing and altogether without blemish,—based on the love [illegible] and man and on absolute chastity. . . .

"Swami Vivekananda has made many friends outside the circle of his followers; he has met all phases of society on equal terms of friendship and brotherhood; his classes and lectures have been attended by the most intellectual people and advanced thinkers of our cities; and his influence has already grown into a deep, strong undercurrent of spiritual awakening. No praise or blame has moved him to either approbation or expostulation; neither money nor position has influenced or prejudiced him. Towards demonstrations of undue favouritism he has invariably maintained a priestly attitude of inattention, checking foolish advances with a dignity impossible to resist, blaming not any but wrong-doers and evil-thinkers, exhorting only to purity and right living. He is altogether such a man as "kings delight to honour."

Swami Kripananda, in a letter dated February 19, 1896, to the *Brahmavâdin*, describing the influence exercised by the Swami at this time, writes as follows:

" Since my last letter (of January 31) an immense amount of work has been accomplished by our beloved teacher in the furtherance of our great cause. The wide interest awakened by his teaching, is shown in the ever-increasing number of those who attend the class lessons and the large crowds that come to hear his public Sunday-lectures. . . .

" . . . . The strong current of religious thought sent out in his lectures and writings, the powerful impetus given by his teachings to the pursuit of truth without regard to inherited superstitions and prejudices, though working silently and unconsciously, is exercising a beneficial and lasting effect on the popular mind and so becoming an important factor in the spiritual uplifting of society. Its most palpable manifestation is shown in the growing demand for Vedântic literature and the frequent use of Sanskrit terms by people from whom one would least expect to hear them: Atman, Purusha, Prakriti, Moksha, and similar expressions have acquired full citizenship, and the names of Sankaracharya and Ramanuja are becoming with many almost as familiar as Huxley and Spencer. The public libraries are running after everything that has reference to India: the books of Max Muller, Colebrooke, Deussen, Burnouf, and of all the authors that have ever written in English on Hindu philosophy, find a ready sale; and even the dry and tiresome Schopenhauer, on account of his Vedantic background, is being studied with great eagerness.

" People are quick to appreciate the grandeur and beauty of a system which, equally as a philosophy and a religion, appeals to the heart as well as to the reason, and satisfies all the religious cravings of human nature; especially so, when it is being expounded by one who, like our teacher, with his wonderful oratory is able to rouse at will the dormant love of the divinely sublime in the human soul, and with his sharp and irrefutable logic to easily convince the most stubborn mind of the most scientific matter-of-fact man. No wonder, therefore, that this interest in Hindu thought is to be met with among all classes of society. . . ."

It was during this period that the Swami was giving his class lessons on "Bhakti Yoga" and a series of lectures on "Jnâna Yoga" and on "Sânkhya and Vedânta." He closed his public lectures at Madison Square Garden on February 24, with an inspired lecture on "My Master," which has become famous as a masterpiece of eloquence and as a glorious tribute to his Master. It so happened that this was the very date of the public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday anniversary in India. On Thursday, the 20th, several young men and women took Mantras and on the preceding Thursday, the 13th, Dr. Street, a devout disciple, was initiated by the Swami as a Sannyâsin, with the name of Yogânanda. The impressive ceremony was performed in the presence of the other Sannyâsin and Brahmachâri disciples. The fact that the Swami had made three Sannyâsins within one year, that three men representing learning, position and culture, should have abandoned the world and the worldly life, taking the vows of chastity and poverty and obedience, showed how he had brought home, to some at least in that land of worldly enjoyment, a strong conviction of the necessity of renunciation as the only means of realising the Truth. The Press regarded this fact as "one of the most marvellous evidences of the Swami's powerful influence for good" over those who came into personal contact with him. Many who had been only admirers, now became the Swami's personal disciples, and expressed a strong desire to be initiated by him into Brahmacharya. Swami Kripananda concludes the letter quoted above by saying in a half-humorous way:

" By the way, India had better at once make clear her title to the ownership of the Swami. They are about to write his biography for the national Encyclopædia of the United States of America, thus making of him an American citizen. The time may come when even as seven cities disputed with each other for the honour of having given birth to Homer, seven countries may claim our Master as theirs, and thus rob India of the honour of producing one of the noblest of her children."

Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, one of the foremost poetesses and writers of America and one of the most representative women in the world, referring to her meeting with the Swami, wrote as follows to the *New York American* of May 26, 1907:

"Twelve years ago I chanced one evening to hear that a certain teacher of philosophy from India, a man named Vivekananda, was to lecture a block from my home in New York.

"We went out of curiosity (the Man whose name I bear and I), and before we had been ten minutes in the audience we felt ourselves lifted up into an atmosphere so rarified, so vital, so wonderful, that we sat spell-bound and almost breathless, to the end of the lecture.

"When it was over we went out with new courage, new hope, new strength, new faith, to meet life's daily vicissitudes. 'This is the Philosophy, this is the idea of God, the religion which I have been seeking,' said the Man. And for months afterwards he went with me to hear Swami Vivekananda explain the old religion and to gather from his wonderful mind jewels of truth and thoughts of helpfulness and strength. It was that terrible winter of financial disasters, when banks failed and stocks went down like broken balloons and business men walked through the dark valleys of despair and the whole world seemed topsy-turvy—just such an era as we are again approaching. Sometimes after sleepless nights of worry and anxiety, the Man would go with me to hear the Swami lecture, and then he would come out into the winter gloom and walk down the street smiling and say, 'It is all right. There is nothing to worry over.' And I would go back to my own duties and pleasures with the same uplifted sense of soul and enlarged vision.

"When any philosophy, any religion, can do this for human beings in this age of stress and strain, and when, added to that, it intensifies their faith in God and increases their sympathies for their kind and gives them a confident joy in the thought of other lives to come, it is a good and great religion."

And not only did this celebrated lady meet the Swami, but she became "a devout pupil of the old beautiful Religion of India, as taught by Vivekananda." She writes further in conclusion:

> "We need to learn the greatness of the philosophy of India. We need to enlarge our narrow creeds with the wisdom religious. But we want to imbue them with our own modern spirit of progress, and to apply them practically, lovingly and patiently to human needs. Vivekananda came to us with a message. . . 'I do not come to convert you to a new belief' he said. 'I want you to keep your own belief; I want to make the Methodist a better Methodist; the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian; the Unitarian a better Unitarian. I want to teach you to live the truth, to reveal the light within your own soul.' He gave the message that strengthened the man of business, that caused the frivolous society woman to pause and think; that gave the artist new aspirations; that imbued the wife and mother, the husband and father, with a larger and holier comprehension of duty."

In fact, many famous philosophers and scientists, and the very best of New York's social representatives attended the Swami's lectures or came to his rooms to see him and went away filled with a new spiritual vision and a luminous insight. In a letter dated February 17, he wrote to his friends in India that he had succeeded in rousing the very heart of American civilisation. This was literally true; thousands of persons of all classes had not only heard his message but had actually proclaimed themselves as Vedântins and as his disciples. Thus his desire of reaching the people was fulfilled. He had by this time concluded his class lectures on Râja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Karma Yoga, which were, by the labours of Mr. Goodwin, ready for the Press; besides, several of his Sunday lectures had already appeared in pamphlet form.

Having finished his work in New York the Swami left on invitation to Detroit to hold classes and lectures for two weeks. Of this period of work, Mrs. Funke writes:

". . . He was accompanied by his stenographer, the faithful Goodwin. They occupied a suite of rooms at *The Richelieu,* a small family hotel, and had the use of the large drawing-room for class work and lectures. The room was not large enough to accommodate the crowds and to our great regret many were turned away. The room, as also the hall, staircase and library were literally packed. At that time he was all Bhakti—the love for God was a hunger and a thirst with him. A kind of divine madness seemed to take possession of him, as if his heart would burst with longing for the Beloved Mother.

" His last public appearance in Detroit was at the Temple Beth El of which the Rabbi Louis Grossman, an ardent admirer of the Swami, was the pastor. It was Sunday evening and so great was the crowd that we almost feared a panic. There was a solid line reaching far out into the street and hundreds were turned away. Vivekananda held the large audience spell-bound, his subject being, ' India's Message to the West,' and ' The Ideal of a Universal Religion.' He gave us a most brilliant and masterly discourse. Never had I seen the Master look as he looked that night. There was something in his beauty not of earth. It was as if the spirit had almost burst the bonds of flesh and it was then that I first saw a foreshadowing of the end. He was much exhausted from years of overwork, and it was even then to be seen that he was not long for this world. I tried to close my eyes to it, but in my heart I knew the truth. He had needed rest but felt that he must go on."

The next vision of the Swami—one of the most remarkable incidents of his whole American career—is before the graduate students of the philosophical department of Harvard University. Mr. Fox had invited him earlier in the year to present his ideas and his philosophy to this society, one of the foremost intellectual bodies in the world. The Swami had accepted the invitation, and on March 25, he spoke on the "Philosophy of the Vedânta" in such a profound manner as to create an indelible impression on the minds of the professors. Indeed, they offered him a Chair of Eastern Philosophy in the University. But he could not accept this as he was a Sannyâsin. It was a trying experience for the Swami to speak before this great critical gathering; but he was at his best and his interpretation of his philosophy excited the most hearty commendation. Indeed, the Rev. C. C. Everett, D.D., LL.D., of Harvard University, in the introduction to the pamphlet, embodying the Swami's address and a record of his answers to questions together with the discussion which followed before that institution, writes:

> " . . . Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest in himself and his work. There are indeed few departments of study more attractive than the Hindu thought. It is a rare pleasure to see a form of belief that to most seems so far away and unreal as the Vedanta system, represented by an actually living and extremely intelligent believer. This system is not to be regarded merely as a curiosity, as a speculative vagary. Hegel said that Spinozism is the necessary beginning of all philosophising. This can be said even more emphatically of the Vedanta system. We Occidentals busy ourselves with the manifold. We can, however, have no understanding of the manifold, if we have no sense of the One in which the manifold exists. The reality of the One is the truth which the East may well teach us; and we owe a debt of gratitude to Vivekananda that he has taught this lesson so effectively."

His answers to the graduating class in philosophy at Harvard were full of penetration, wit, eloquence and philosophical freshness and vitality. In his address he had given a remarkably clear exposition of the cosmology and general principles of the Vedânta, showing the points of reconciliation between the theories of science and the theories of the Vedânta concerning matter and force. He had answered questions asked in a critical spirit appertaining to the influence of Hindu on Stoic philosophy, to caste, to the relation between Advaita and Dvaita, to the theory of the Absolute, and to the contrast between self-hypnotism and Râja Yoga. Speaking of the latter, the Swami remarked that Oriental psychology was infinitely more thorough than the Occidental, asserting that man is already hypnotised and that Yoga is an effort at de-hypnotisation of self. He said, "It is the Advaitist alone that does not care to be hypnotised. His is the only system that more or less understands that hypnotism comes with every form of dualism. But the Advaitist says, throw away even the Vedas, throw away even the Personal God, throw away even the universe, throw away even your own body and mind, and let nothing remain, in order to get rid of hypnotism perfectly . . . ." Asked concerning the Yoga powers, the Swami replied that the highest form of Yoga power manifested itself in a Vedânta character and in the continuous perception of divinity as exemplified in the instance of "a Yogi" (Pavhari Baba) "who was bitten by a cobra, and who fell down on the ground. In the evening he revived, and when asked what had happened he said, 'A messenger came from my Beloved.' All hatred and anger and jealousy had been burned out of this man. Nothing could make him react; he was infinite love all the time, and he was omnipotent in his power of love. That is the real Yogi." He added that the highest spiritual power embodied itself in a demonstration of spiritual freedom and in a constant accession of spiritual vision and insight, the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi being the climax thereof. When asked by the professors, "What is the Vedântic idea of civilisation?" the Swami made answer that true civilisation was the manifestation of the divinity within, and that that land was the most civilised wherein the highest ideals were made practical.

The Swami was not a preacher of theory. If there was any one feature of the Vedânta philosophy which he propounded, which appeared especially refreshing, it was its possibility of practical demonstration. The West was wedded to the idea that religion is a sublime theory which can be brought into practice and made tangible for people only in another life, but the Swami showed them the folly of this.

At Boston he spoke on universal religion. It seems that wherever the Swami went he spoke on "The Ideals of a Universal Religion," a religion of principles, with a background of Advaita, and forms suitable to the individual temperaments of different nations and personalities.

The Swami was physically worn out by this time. He had worked to the point of exhaustion, and yet strange to say one does not find him flagging in the least. After closing his public lectures in New York in the latter part of February, 1896, the Swami consolidated his American work by organising the Vedânta movement into a definite society and by issuing his teachings in book form. Thus came into existence "The Vedanta Society of New York" of which he was the founder, a non-sectarian body with the aim of preaching and practising the Vedânta, and applying its principles to all religions. It invited members of all religious creeds and organisations to become its members, without change of faith. Toleration and acceptance of all religions were its watchwords and described its general character. Its members became known as "Vedântins" and met regularly at appointed times for the purpose of carrying on co-operative and organised work, and for the study and propagation of Vedânta literature.

Some of the Swami's great works like "Râja Yoga," "Bhakti Yoga" and "Karma Yoga" had already been published and had speedily attained a wide circulation. The American journals received and reviewed these works favourably and the book, "Râja Yoga" aroused a considerable discussion among the psychologists and physiologists of some of the leading Universities.

More and more as time went on, the Swami found it necessary to systematise his religious ideas; to do so he felt that he would necessarily have to reorganise the entire Hindu philosophical thought and to group its distinctive features round the leading tenets of the Hindu religious systems, thus making it more intelligible to Western minds. He wanted to bring out according to different schools of Vedânta, the ideas of the soul and the Divinity or final goal, the relation of matter and force and the Vedântic conception of cosmology, and how they coincided with modern science. He also intended to draw up a classification of the Upanishads according to the passages which have a distinct bearing on the Advaita, the Visishtâdvaita and the Dvaita conceptions, in order to show how all of them can be reconciled. He planned to write a book, carefully working out all these ideas in a definite form. That he had this idea for a long time is shown by a letter which he wrote from England in 1896, saying that he was busy collecting passages from the various Vedas bearing on the Vedânta in its threefold aspects. For this reason he had been sending to India for the Vedânta Sutras with the Bhâshyas of all the sects, as also the Brâhmanas, the Upanishads and the Purânas. When these works came his first task, he thought, would be to remodel the Indian thought-forms therein contained so as to be acceptable to the modernised intellect of the West. And his aim was, as he himself had written long before to one of his disciples:

> " To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry Philosophy and intricate Mythology and queer startling Psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest

minds—is a task which only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life ; out of hopelessly intricate Mythology must come concrete moral forms ; and out of bewildering Yogiism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology—and all this must be put into a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work. The Lord only knows how far I shall succeed. To work we have the right, not to the fruits thereof. It is hard work, my boy, hard work!"

Yes, to be sure, the task was Herculean; but certainly the Swami had succeeded in some measure. His experience in the West and his constant meditation on religious matters, drew out of him surprisingly original observations upon Indian philosophy, which culminated in his bringing about later on in India itself, a thorough restatement of Indian ideas. And it may be said without dispute that, in an especial sense he was the first of Indian philosophers to prove the Hindu spiritual ideas to be truly scientific as well; and it was he alone who has shown the philosophical truths behind the Paurânic and mythological forms of Hinduism. By the time he went to Thousand Island Park he had with him the Bhâshyas of all the sects, and all his philosophical writings and utterances were, as it were, so many commentaries upon these, which were remarkably original in their expression. He would accept no authority as final, "knowing full well how each commentator, in turn, had twisted the texts to suit his own meaning." Whensoever he made comments in his classes upon the Vedas or other Hindu scriptures, he threw a whole world of light and revelation upon the texts.

One of the Swami's purposes in organising his classes into a society, besides carrying on the spiritual work he had commenced, was *particularly* to bring about an interchange of ideals and ideas between the East and the West. He wanted centres of vital and continual communication between the two worlds and to make "open doors, as it were, through which the East and the West could pass freely back and forth, without a feeling of strangeness, as from one home to another." Already he had in his mind the plan of bringing some of his brother disciples from India to teach and preach in America, and also of having some of his American and English disciples go to India and teach and preach there. In America it would be a religious teaching, and in India it would be a practical teaching, a message of science, industry, economics, applied sociology, organisation and co-operation. Day and night the Swami pondered on the means and ways of reconciling these two great worlds,—the East and the West,—and in a form of prophetic vision, he would often tell his American followers, that the time would come when the lines of demarcation, both in thought and in ideal, between the two would be obliterated. He had long since, when he was in England, written to the Swami Saradananda that he desired him to come to the West, but for one reason or another his departure was delayed.

In the spring of 1896 letters came pouring in to the Swami, beseeching him to come to England again and to systematise the work he had initiated there. He had himself felt the urgent need of doing so; and it was this reason which actuated him to organise his New York work all the sooner. New York, being the metropolis of America, and London being the metropolis of England, he knew that if he could leave organised societies in both these cities, the work of acquainting the whole English-speaking Western world with his message would in time become a definite possibility. With this object in view, he was also training such of his disciples as he could depend upon. Thus upon Miss S. E. Waldo, who became known as "Sister Haridâsi," the Swami conferred spiritual powers and authority, saying that she alone, of all others, was best able to teach the practice and philosophy of Râja Yoga. Then, too, he had been carefully training Swamis Kripananda, Abhayananda and Yogananda and a number of Brahmachârins into an intimate and learned acquaintance with the Vedânta philosophy, in its threefold aspects. And there were those of his disciples who were achieving a true insight into his message. Upon all these he was relying to further the cause of the Vedânta during his intended absence in England, and subsequently in India, for he had made up his mind to sail in the middle of April for Europe, and, having finished his work there, to sail for his motherland.

Before leaving New York he made Mr. Francis H. Leggett, one of the wealthy and influential residents of the city, the President of the Vedânta Society. The other offices were occupied by the Swami's initiate disciples. Among those who counted themselves as eager workers in his cause at this time were Miss Mary Phillips, a lady prominent in many circles in woman's charitable and intellectual work in the metropolis, Mrs. Arthur Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Goodyear, and Miss Emma Thursby, the famous singer. The chief members of the Society had been urging upon the Swami the advisability of sending for one of his Gurubhâis to conduct his classes and work in general during his absence, and the Swami, abiding by their wishes, wrote definitely to the Swami Saradananda, some time before his return to England asking him to come to London at once as the guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. On April 15, the Swami himself sailed for England from New York.

Though he was constantly in a whirlwind of work, Swami Vivekananda delighted in hours of rest and leisure when he could throw off his burden of teaching and preaching; at such times, he would enjoy himself like a child. The giving of his message was, in his case, the giving of his life's blood. Nothing interested him more in times of mental and physical weariness than to "talk nonsense" and be amused. He would take up a copy of "Punch" or some other comic paper and laugh till the tears rolled from his eyes. He demanded diversion of mind, because he knew that there was the tendency in him to drift into serious moods of thought; and those who loved him were glad at heart when they saw him joyous as a child at play.

He heartily enjoyed a good story. He never forgot any such told to him and would use it himself to the amusement of others when occasion arose. A few may be here cited. A lady whose husband was a friend of the Swami and who took him for his first sleigh ride, came to know him closely when she and the Swami were guests of Mrs. Bagley at Amisquam, in August of 1894. She writes to Sister Nivedita:

> " We were friends at once. . . . He lectured only once at Amisquam. It was his holiday time. . . . He used to turn to me and say, ' Tell me a story.' I remember he was greatly amused by a tale about a Chinaman who had been arrested for stealing pork and who, in reply to the Justice who remarked that he thought Chinamen did not eat pork, said, ' Oh! Me Melican man now. Me, sir, me steal, me eat pork, me everything.' How often I have heard Vivekananda say, *sotto voce,* ' Me Melican man.' These things would seem trifling to anyone who does not know the Swami as you do. But, nothing which concerned him could seem trivial or of poor report to you, I am sure.
>
> " I had lived for three years on an Indian Reservation in Canada. The Swami was never tired of listening to anecdotes about the Red men. One I remember amused him greatly.

An Indian whose wife had just died came to the Parsonage for some nails for her coffin. While waiting he asked my cook if she would marry him! Naturally she was very indignant, and in reply to her sorrowful refusal the man only said, ' Wait, you see.' The following Sunday much to our amusement he came and sat upon one of the gate posts. He had a feather stuck jauntily in his hat, and hair oil, of which he had been most prodigal, was trickling down his cheeks. It happened that the Swami was giving sittings for his portrait just then and we went to the Studio to see how the portrait was progressing. Just as I entered the Studio a little oil ran down the cheek of the portrait, and the Swami seeing it said instantly, ' Getting ready to marry the cook!'. . . Knowing the Swami as you did, you must have realised what an exquisite sense of humour he had. . . ."

But of all other stories, two which he relished most and which sent him into fits of laughter, were those respectively of a new Christian missionary to a cannibal tribe, and that of the "darky" clergyman, preaching on "Creation." As to the former: There was once a Christian missionary newly arrived in a far-off island inhabited by cannibals. He proceeded to the chief of the place and asked him, "Well, how did you like my predecessor?" The reply was, "He was simply de—li—cious." And as for the "darky" preacher,—he was shouting out, "Yo see, God was making Adam, and he was a makin im out o' mud. And when he had a-got im made, he stucks im up again a fence to dry. And then—" "Hold on, there, preacher," suddenly cried out a learned listener. "What abouts dat ere fence? Whos a-made dat fence?" The preacher replied sharply: "Now youse listen here, Sam Jones. Don't youse be a gwining to ask such ere questions. Youse'll ere smash up all theology."

Great souls are not always serious. This power of complete relaxation was as much a part of the Swami's greatness as were his intellectual powers and spiritual realisations. One would like to know the personal temperament, the personal incident, the human side of a teacher as well as his words of Revelation. Those who live in the personal environment of great men love them for their human qualities, and it was so with the disciples and admirers of Swami Vivekananda. They made every effort to divert his mind and found that the diversion made him deliver his message all the clearer. Several of his most intimate friends, persons of position and wealth in the Western world, understood his need for rest and recreation, and invited him to spend short holidays at their residences. There he was allowed absolute personal freedom. Did he desire to talk, they would listen with rapt attention. Did he desire to sing the songs of his own land, he could do so freely. If he sat in silent abstraction they left him to his mood. Times were when he would break the silence of days in a rhapsody of divine eloquence; and then again he would talk on matters that required no mental concentration. After giving some lecture that throbbed with spiritual power and realisation he would often dance in glee saying, "Thank God, it is over!" He would come down unexpectedly from the mountain-tops of insight to the levels of childlike simplicity in a moment.

With those in the West with whom he was particularly free he would say frankly whatever came into his mind. He called them oftentimes by familiar names as he did Mr. and Mrs. Hale, whom he styled "Father Pope" and "Mother Church"; another he called "Yum", "Jojo", and so on. When they prepared some delicious recipe he would look pleadingly at it, his eyes beaming with joy—and then, eat with his fingers as he was wont to do in India, saying that he *liked* to do so and that he enjoyed it more in that way. At first it was shocking to the Westerners but when they understood it gave them pleasure to let him have his own way. They would be specially amused when in the privacy of their homes he would take off his collar and throw off the boots which made him uncomfortable and slip his feet into a pair of house-slippers; and as to cuffs, they were an abomination in his eyes. The Sannyâsin nature in him would resent at times all conventions and etiquette. His indifference to money was characteristic. It is told by his American disciples how he would often look with dread upon money he had received from friends for his own use, and would give it away freely to the poor or to those in need. Or it might be that he would immediately purchase presents for his friends and disciples, as was the case at Thousand Island Park when he was given a handsome purse at the end of his class work. The whole sum was spent in this way.

The Swami demanded personal freedom on all occasions; if he did not receive it, he shook himself free. He could not tolerate to be patronised; and when a certain woman of wealth endeavoured to make him do as *she* desired in matters of plans and arrangements, he disrupted them all. She would be irritated for the time being and then later on say of him laughingly and lovingly, "At the last moment he upsets all my plans for him. He *must* have his own way. He is just like a mad bull in a china-shop." While he would go to any length when it was a matter of service or loyalty, he never allowed anyone to compel him to do certain things. And he certainly displayed wonderful patience with some, whom he believed, in spite of personal irritation, to be instruments of the Lord in the furthering of His cause. For otherwise, his first impulse would be to throw them overboard. He could not tolerate restraint.

There were times when he would say, "Oh! The body is a terrible bondage!" or "How I wish that I could 'hide myself for ever!'" and all would see the spirit in him as though chained in agony to the fetters of the flesh. Such moments often came to him, as for example, when he wrote his poems "My Play is Done," and "The Song of the Sannyâsin;" and here and there in scores of his letters this is evident. To cite from a letter to Mrs. Bull:

> "I have a note-book which has travelled with me all over the world. I find therein these words written seven years ago, —'Now to seek a corner and lay myself down to die!' Yet all this Karma remained. I hope I have worked it out.
>
> "It appears like a hallucination that I was in these childish dreams of doing this and doing that. I am getting out of them. . . . . Perhaps these mad desires were necessary to bring me over to this country. And I thank the Lord for the experience."

When his disciples found him in such moods they feared that the Hour of Deliverance might come on suddenly and the body drop. So they rejoiced to see him in his lighter moods.

An illustrative incident of the Swami's human side as told by one of his disciples happened in the city of Detroit. On a certain occasion he went to the house of one of his admirers and, with that unique sense of freedom and frankness which was his, asked to be allowed to cook an Indian meal himself. The request was immediately granted, and then to the amusement of everyone present, he gathered from his pockets some score or more of tiny packets filled with finely-grounded condiments and spices. These had been sent all the way from India, and wherever he went these packets went with him. At one time, one of his choicest and most prized possessions was a bottle of *chutney* some gentleman had thoughtfully sent him from Madras. His Western disciples delighted to have him cook his own dishes in their kitchens. They helped him also in this, and thus time would pass by in merriment and making new experiments. He would make the dishes so hot with spices that they were not palatable to a Western taste and many times the preparations took so long that when the food was ready to be served the party was literally ravenous. Then there would be much talk and laughter, and he would take the keenest delight in seeing how the Western tongue stood the hot-spiced dishes of distant Hindusthan. They were, no doubt, soothing to his high-strung temperament and tired nerves, but certainly not "good for his liver" as he insisted they were. This human side of the Swami bound his disciples to him in deep human love.

Nothing he enjoyed so much at times as to be seated cozily near a fire in winter-time and plunge into reminiscences of his early days. Or he would spend the morning or evening in reading comic papers and magazines from cover to cover. As for newspapers he betrayed the reporter's instinct in reading only the head-lines. This was his diversion; but at any moment the saint and prophet in him might emerge. One disciple who could not understand him at first, unfortunately being in his presence only in his times of recreation, was one day suddenly made conscious of the Swami's true nature. This disciple saw the Swami enjoying himself heartily. But when he asked him a question concerning religion, the countenance of the Swami changed instantly. Fun gave place to the revelation of the highest spiritual truths. He says, "It seemed as though the Swami had of a sudden cast aside the layer of that consciousness in which he had been then enjoying himself and made me aware of other layers *behind* the net-work of changing personality." But it was more than the power to transfigure his consciousness suddenly from fun to holiness and Jnânam that he manifested. He was actually possessed of a dual consciousness. Whilst he might be playing, as it were, on the surface of his personality, one was made aware *at the same moment* of the mighty flow of the immense depths beneath.

At the end of his American work he was thoroughly tired. Indeed, after he had made a railway journey it seemed for days as though the wheels of the trains revolved with their noise in his brain; yet his head was always clear, though at times he grew exceedingly nervous. The strain of the years of his Sâdhanâ in the East and teaching in the West, had been too much for him. His friends feared a complete breakdown; and, as a matter of fact, slowly but surely his body was failing, though he himself was the last to be conscious of this, and all the time worked harder than ever. His friends could not help seeing the cost to the body of delivering his spiritual message. They knew that he had given himself wholly and unstintingly for the good of those who made his message the gospel of their lives.

As may be readily imagined there were many aspects of the Swami's personality and teachings during his stay in America prior to his second visit to England, which must remain unknown forever. According to his disciples, "Each hour of the day there would be some new idea, some new human sweetness, some illuminating thought on the vastness of the soul and the divinity of man, some new, boundless hope, some startlingly original plan that would radiate from his personality." One disciple says, "Simply to walk on the city streets with him, meant to be translated to marvellous worlds of thought or power suddenly from the sheerest fun." Still another records, "He always made one feel that he was all spirit and not body, and this in spite of the fact that his magnificent physical frame irresistibly attracted the attention of every one." Another disciple says:

> " It would be impossible for me to describe the overwhelming force of Swamiji's presence. He could rivet attention upon himself: and when he spoke in all seriousness and intensity,—though it seems well nigh incredible—there were some among his hearers who were literally exhausted. The subtlety of his thoughts and arguments swept them off their feet. In one case I know of a man who was forced to rest in bed for three days as the result of a nervous shock received by a discussion with the Swami. His personality was at once awe-inspiring and sublime. He had the faculty of literally annihilating one if he so chose."

On many an occasion he would draw out one who differed from him, only to bewilder and confuse him. And yet these very ones who were thus "prostrated by that radiant power" attested most to his sweetness. They said, "He is a marvellous combination of sweetness and irresistible force, verily a child and a prophet in one." Indeed, if all the descriptions of his ideas and personality at this period were recorded, they would of themselves constitute a complete volume.

All through his American work his mind was full with plans. From the very first it was his intention, when he had once gained a learned and extensive hearing and established his mission on a solid basis, to found a "Temple Universal," as he styled it, wherein should congregate, in harmony, all the religious sects of the world, worshipping but one symbol, "OM," which represents the Absolute. But his intense, all-absorbing work in founding his own

Vedânta movement prevented him from carrying out this noble ideal.

Still another plan of his about which he had written to Mrs. Bull in the beginning of the year 1895, was to purchase lands in the Catskill mountains to the extent of one hundred and eight acres, where his students could go for Sâdhanâ during the summer holidays and build camps or cottages as they liked, until permanent buildings could be erected. He said that he would himself contribute the funds to buy the land.

It is a painful and unpleasant task to have constantly to revert to a recital of the slanders that were frequently heaped upon the Swami by self-seeking and malicious parties, but the demands of biographical treatment would not be fulfilled were this not done. The greatness of the Swami looms up larger on the horizon of true judgment when one knows what tremendous obstacles he was forced to encounter and how much suffering he experienced, AS A MONK, by the many lies circulated against his purity and temperance.

There were two occasions in particular during his American work when his character was assailed. Maddened to desperation by the official reports that "because of Vivekananda's success and teaching the contributions to the Indian missionary funds had decreased in one year by as much as one million pounds," certain zealot missionaries, circulated the story that "because of Vivekânanda, Mrs. Bagley (the wife of the ex-Governor of Michigan) has had to dismiss a servant-girl; he is dreadfully intemperate." Fortunately there are in existence three letters from the Bagley family which conclusively deny such malicious statements. A letter of the Swami written on March 21, 1895, to Mrs. Ole Bull concerning these incidents is also in the possession of his disciples; it reads:

> "I am astonished to hear the scandals the R—— circle are indulging in about me. Among others, one item is that Mrs. Bagley of Detroit had to dismiss a servant-girl on account of my bad character!!! Don't you see, Mrs. Bull, that however a man may conduct himself, there will always be persons who will invent the blackest lies about him. At Chicago I had such things spread every day against me.
>
> "And these women are invariably the very Christian of Christians! . . . ."

Other letters similar to this, which the Swami wrote at this time were filled with the bitterest indignation against the vicious slanderers who would even be willing to let their "souls go to hell itself" rather than let "this d——d Hindu," as some called him, "interfere with our work." The Swami could not realise why they should invent these charges against him. He was at first taken aback, but he took hope amidst the blackest despair when he learned through his friends that these persons had no prestige and standing amongst honest Christians, that they were regarded as "blue-nosed," "hard-shelled" and "soft-shelled" fanatics. The Swami marked well that none of the missionary bodies of standing and education, such as "The Oxford Mission," militated against him. What pleased him most during his stay in England, was to meet only with the kindest and most sympathetic treatment from the ecclesiastics there. But the testimony of Mrs. Bagley herself and of her daughter, is particularly in point. Writing to a lady friend from Amisquam, Mass., on June 22, 1894, Mrs. Bagley says:

> "You write of my dear friend, Vivekananda. I am glad of an opportunity to express my admiration of his character, and it makes me most indignant that any one should call him

in question. He has given us in America higher ideas of life than we have ever had before. In Detroit, an old conservative city, in all the Clubs he is honoured as no one has ever been, and I only feel that all who say one word against him are jealous of his greatness and his fine spiritual perceptions ; and yet how can they be? He does nothing to make them so.

" He has been a revelation to Christians, ... he has made possible for us all a diviner and more noble practical life. As a religious teacher and an example to all I do not know of his equal. It is so wrong and so untrue to say that he is intemperate. All who have been brought in contact with him day by day, speak enthusiastically of his sterling qualities of character, and men in Detroit who judge most critically, and who are unsparing, admire and respect him. . . He has been a guest in my house more than three weeks, and my sons as well as my son-in-law and my entire family found Swami Vivekananda a gentleman always, most courteous and polite, a charming companion and an ever-welcome guest. I have invited him to visit us at my summer-home here at Amisquam, and in my family he will always be honoured and welcomed. I am really sorry for those who say aught against him, more than I am angry, for they know so little what they are talking about. He has been with Mr. and Mrs. Hale of Chicago much of the time while in that city. I think that has been his home. They invited him first as guest and later were unwilling to part with him. They are Presbyterians; . . . . . cultivated and refined people, and they admire, respect and love Vivekananda. He is a strong, noble human being, one who walks with God. He is as simple and trustful as a child. In Detroit I gave him an evening reception, inviting ladies and gentlemen, and two weeks afterwards he lectured to invited guests in my parlour. . . . . I had included lawyers, judges, ministers, army-officers, physicians and business-men with their wives and daughters. Vivekananda talked two hours on ' The Ancient Hindu Philosophers and What They Taught.' All listened with intense interest to the end. Wherever he spoke people listened gladly and said, ' I never heard man speak like that.' He does not antagonise, but lifts people up to a higher level——they see something beyond man-made creeds and denominational names, and they feel one with him in their religious beliefs.

" Every human being would be made better by knowing him and living in the same house with him. . . . I want every one in America to know Vivekananda, and if India has more such let her send them to us. . . ."

Again in another letter, dated March 20, 1895, she writes in reply to the same lady:

" . . . Let my first word be that all this about Swami Vivekananda is an absolute falsehood from beginning to end. Nothing could be more false. We all enjoyed every day of the six weeks he spent with us. . . . He was invited by the different clubs of gentlemen in Detroit, and dinners were given him in beautiful homes so that greater numbers might meet him and talk with him and hear him talk . . . and everywhere and at all times he was, as he deserved to be, honoured and respected. No one can know him without respecting his integrity and excellence of character and his strong religious nature. At Amisquam last summer I had a cottage and we wrote Vivekananda, who was in Boston, inviting him again to visit us there, which he did, remaining three weeks, not only conferring a favour upon us, but a great pleasure I am sure, to friends who had cottages near us. My servants, I have had many years and they are all still with me. Some of them went with us to Amisquam, the others were at home. You can see how wholly without foundation are all these stories. Who this woman in Detroit is, of whom you speak, I do not know. I only know this that every word of her story is as untrue and false as possible. . . . . We all know Vivekananda. Who are they that speak so falsely? . . ."

This dignified and powerful refutation of the scandals circulated against the Swami was supplemented by another letter written on the following day by Mrs. Bagley's daughter (Helen Bagley). It reads:

" I am glad to know that the story was not circulated by R——. If I find it possible I wish to see Mrs. S—— and ask her what her authority for such a statement was. I shall do it quietly of course, but I am going to find out for once if possible who starts these lies about Vivekananda. These things travel fast, and if once one is uprooted, perhaps these women will stop to think before they circulate a story so readily. If only they would investigate them they would find how false they all are. . . ."

The Swami, as a matter of fact, knew too well, that he had little cause to feel either himself or his work seriously harmed by the many attacks on his personality. Then, he had the satisfaction of knowing that thousands of others regarded and knew him as a man of absolute purity and unparalleled integrity. Besides, from every quarter of America reports of his teaching and of its influence came pouring in. The only occasion when he was seriously incensed, was when certain parties, securing the photograph of his Master, managed to have it printed in one of the leading papers of a large Mid-Western city, together with slurring comments upon his appearance and upon Hinduism and Hindu Yogis in general. Then he was heard to exclaim, "Oh! This *is* BLASPHEMY!"

In striking contrast to these unpleasantnesses, he had as a real consolation the thought that he was reverenced and loved by the finest minds in the land. Even before his public reception at the Harvard University in 1896, he had been received privately in September of 1894 by some members of the University faculty and by many of the graduate philosophical students. Following close upon this, the Columbia University offered him the Chair of Sanskrit, which honour he had to decline because he was a Sannyâsin.

It was at this time that the Swami met the distinguished Professor William James of Harvard at dinner at the residence of Mrs. Ole Bull. After dinner the Swami and the Professor drew together in earnest and subdued conversation. It was midnight when they rose from their long discourse. Eager to know the result of the meeting of these two great minds, Mrs. Bull asked, "Well, Swami, how did you like Professor James?" He replied, in a sort of abstracted way, "A very nice man, a very nice man!" laying emphasis on the word nice. The next day the

Swami handed a letter to Mrs. Bull with the casual remark, "You may be interested in this." Mrs. Bull read and to her amazement saw that Professor James, in inviting the Swami to meet him at his own residence for dinner a few days later, had addressed him as "Master." The tribute of Professor James's regard for the Swami is evinced, on many occasions, in his writings, and he speaks of him deferentially as "that paragon of Vedântists." In his classical work, "The Variety of Religious Experience" he specially refers to the Swami in connection with monistic mysticism. In his celebrated essay, "The Energies of Men," he speaks of a University professor who underwent the Râja Yoga practices as a cure for nervous disorders, and who received thereby not only physical benefit but intellectual and spiritual illumination as well. There are many who believe that in this essay Professor James was describing his own experiences of the Râja Yoga practices as instructed by the Swami.

It must always be remembered that the Swami met influential personages of other fields of thought, besides the religious, and they were charmed with his knowledge of science and art. As early as September 1893, immediately following his appearance at the Parliament, he was introduced to a group of noted scientists at a vegetarian dinner given especially in his honour by Professor Elisha Grey, the electrical inventor, and his wife in their beautiful residence, Highland Park, Chicago. It was at the time that the Electrical Congress was being held, and amongst other distinguished guests who were invited to meet the Swami, there were Sir William Thompson, afterwards Lord Kelvin, Professor Helmholtz and Ariton Hopitallia. The Swami's knowledge of electricity amazed the scientists, and his shining repartees bearing on the matters of science were greeted with sincere pleasure.

There were, of course, scores of lectures given by the Swami, now lost, apart from those which have been incorporated in the "Complete Works" as belonging to the period of his first stay in America. In 1893 he gave a series of lectures in and around Chicago, and the whole of the next year was spent in lecturing throughout the country. In 1894, he made his home for a time with the Guernsey family, the members of which regarded him as "Master" and opened up for him numerous opportunities for holding classes and conversaziones. It was at this time that he met Dr. Lyman Abbot, and was also invited to dine with the editors of the *Outlook*. The lectures known as the "Barber Lectures," were given in 1895 under the patronage of Mrs. Barber, a society woman of Boston. At Amisquam, where he was twice the guest of Mrs. Bagley of Michigan, taking short holidays there in 1894 and in 1895, he gave one public lecture and a number of conversaziones. From January to April 1895, he gave numerous lectures at his own quarters in New York, and in the following month concluded his public lectures in Mott's Memorial Building with "The Science of Religion" and "The Rationale of Yoga," his leading thought being "Unity in Variety is the Plan of Nature," thus reconciling in one sentence the opposing thought-systems of the monistic and the pluralistic outlook. Among the many receptions accorded him during his stay in New York, several of the more successful ones were inaugurated by Miss Phillips.

But the fearless outspokenness of the Swami often alienated that general approval for which so many public workers slave and sacrifice their true views and their principles. And, after all, he found that the American public, though at first it might appear to resent would afterwards regard with great admiration one who dared speak openly of what he felt were the drawbacks of American civilisation. It so happened that he once spoke in Boston before a large audience gathered to hear him on "My Master." Full of the fire of renunciation that he was, when he saw before him the audience composed, for the most part, of worldly-minded men and women lacking in spiritual sympathy and earnestness, he felt that it would be a desecration to speak to them of his understanding of, and his real feelings of devotion for Sri Ramakrishna. So, instead, he launched out in a terrible denunciation of the vulgar, physical and materialistic ideas which underlay the whole of Western civilisation. Hundreds of people left the hall abruptly, but in no way affected, he went on to the end. The next morning the papers were filled with varying criticism, some highly favourable, others severely critical in their analysis of what he had said, but all commenting on his fearlessness, sincerity and frankness. When he himself read the report of his speech, he was stung with remorse. He wept bitterly for thus denouncing others and said, "My Master could not see the evil side of a man. He had nothing but love even for his worst vilifiers. It is nothing short of sacrilege on my part to abuse others and wound their feelings while speaking about my Master. Really I have not understood Sri Ramakrishna and am totally unfit to speak about him!" But that he ever denounced American women, as some of his bitter antagonists have said, is a gross libel. The Swami's own words live to testify to his high opinion concerning them and to his sincere gratitude for the uniform kindness they had shown him.

One of the interesting lectures that the Swami gave during his visit to Boston at the latter part of 1894, when he was the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull, was on "The Ideals of Indian Women." At her special solicitation he gave this lecture to the women of Cambridge, a suburb of Boston. This address which was deep, stirring and patriotic, dwelt on the beauty of character and the ideals of Indian Womanhood in general, and the idea of Indian Motherhood in particular. It was as well, though unconsciously, a reply to the remarks which many ignorant or self-interested persons had circulated concerning the "degraded" condition of Indian Womanhood. So much impressed was the gathering of prominent ladies with the Swami's address that in the time of the approaching Christmas they sent, unbeknown to the Swami himself, the following letter to his mother, in far-off India, together with a beautiful picture of the Child Jesus, in the lap of the Virgin Mary:

" To

" THE MOTHER OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA,

" DEAR MADAM,

" At this Christmas tide, when the gift of Mary's son to the world is celebrated and rejoiced over with us, it would seem the time of remembrance. We, who have your son in our midst, send you greetings. His generous service to men, women and children in our midst was laid at your feet by him, in an address he gave us the other day on the Ideals of Motherhood in India. The worship of his mother will be to all who heard him an inspiration and an uplift.

" Accept, dear Madam, our grateful recognition of your life and work in and through your son. And may it be accepted by you as a slight token of remembrance to serve in its use as a tangible reminder that the world is coming to its true inheritance from God, of Brotherhood and Unity."

Referring to this lecture Mrs. Bull has written:

" . . . Having given from the Vedas, from Sanskrit literature and the dramas these Ideals, and having cited the laws of today favourable to the women of India, he paid his filial homage to his own mother as having enabled him to do the best he had done, by her life of unselfish love and purity, that caused him by his very inheritance to choose the life of a monk."

It was conspicuous in the Swami that wherever he went he paid the highest tribute to his mother, whensoever the occasion arose. One of his friends, recalling the few happy weeks spent as a fellow guest in the house of a common friend writes:

"He spoke often of his mother. I remember his saying that she had wonderful self-control, and that he had never known any woman who could fast so long. She had once gone without food, he said, for as many as fourteen days together. And it was not uncommon for his followers to hear such words upon his lips as, 'It was my mother who inspired me to this. Her character was a constant inspiration to my life and work.'"

Of the many descriptions of the Swami in America, the following extract from a newspaper report is interesting:

"One day, at an unfashionable place by the sea, the professor was seen crossing the lawn between the boarding-house and his cottage accompanied by a man in a long red coat. The coat, which had something of a priestly cut, descended far below the man's knees, and was girded around his waist with a thick cord of the same reddish orange tint. He walked with a strange, shambling gait, and yet there was a commanding dignity and impressiveness in the carriage of his neck and bare head that caused everyone in sight to stop and look at him; he moved slowly, with the swinging tread of one who had never hastened, and in his great dark eyes was the beauty of an alien civilisation which might,—should time and circumstance turn it into opposition,—become intolerably repulsive. He was dark, about the colour of a light quadroon, and his full lips, which in a man of Caucasian race would have been brilliant scarlet, had a tint of bluish purple. His teeth were regular, white, and sometimes cruel, but his beautiful expressive eyes and the proud wonderful carriage of his head, the swing and grace of the heavy crimson tassels that hung from the end of his sash, made one forget that he was too heavy for so young a man, and that long sitting on the floor had visited him with the fate of the tailor.

" . . . He seemed very young, even younger than his twenty-nine years, and as he seated himself he covered his legs carefully with his flowing robe, like a woman or a priest; but the hoary ancient turn of his thought belied his childlike manner.

" . . . And then, having said his say, the Swami was silent. . . . Occasionally he cast his eye up to the roof and repeated softly 'Siva, Siva, Siva!' . . . And a current of powerful feeling seemed to be flowing like molten lava beneath the silent surface of this strange being. . . .

" He stayed days among them, keenly interested in all practical things; his efforts to eat strange food were heroic and sometimes disastrous to himself. He was constantly looking about for something which would widen the possibilities of feeding his people in times of famine. Our ways seemed to inspire him with a sort of horror, meat-eating cannibals that we seemed to be! But he concealed it, either with absolute dumbness, or by a courteous flow of language which effectually hid his thoughts.

" He had been brought up amidst polemics and his habit of argument was mainly Socratic, beginning insidiously and simply by a story,' or clear statement of some incontestable fact, and then from that deriving strange and unanswerable things. All through, his discourses abounded in picturesque illustration and beautiful legends. To work, to get on in the world, in fact, any measure of temporal success seemed to him entirely beside the subject. He had been trained to regard the spiritual life as the real thing of this world! Love of God and love of man! . . . 'The love of the Hindu,' he told us, 'goes further than the love of the Christian, for that stops at man; but the religion of Buddha goes on towards the beasts of the field and every creeping thing that has life.'

" At sixteen he had renounced the world and spent his time among men who rejoiced in these things and looked forward to spending day after day on the banks of the Ganges, talking of the higher life.

" When someone suggested to him that Christianity was a saving power, he opened his great dark eyes upon him and said, 'If Christianity is a saving power in itself, why has it not saved the Ethiopians, the Abyssinians?' He also arraigned our own crimes, the horror of women on the stage, the frightful immorality in our streets, our drunkenness, our thieving, our political degeneracy, the murdering in our West, the lynching in our South, and we, remembering his own Thugs, were still too delicate to mention them.

" . . . He cared for Thomas á Kempis more than for any other writer and had translated a part of the 'Imitation of Christ' into Bengali and written an introduction to it; as for receiving the Stigmata, he spoke of it as the natural result of an agonising love of God. The teaching of the Vedas, constant and beautiful, he applied to every event in life, quoting a few verses and then translating, and with the translation of the story giving the meaning. His mouth, also, was full of wonderful proverbs. 'Of what use is the knowledge that is locked away in books?' he said, in speaking of the memories of Hindu boys.

" Himself a Hindu monk, he told, once, of a time when he turned into a forest, a trackless forest, because he felt that God was leading him, of how he went on for three days, starving and how he was more perfectly happy than he had ever been before because he felt that he was entirely in the hands of God. 'When my time comes,' he said, 'I shall like to go up the mountain and there, by the Ganges, lay myself down, and with the water singing over me I shall go to sleep, and above me will tower the Himalayas—men have gone mad for those mountains!' . . . 'Shall I then like a dog die in my bed when all this beauty is around me?' and he plunged into the chasm.

" The Hindu monks have no monasteries, no property. . . . According to him, the monks were not required to do penance, or to worship. They were, in short, minor deities to the Hindu people; but yet the Swami was wonderfully unspoiled and simple, claiming nothing for himself, playing with the children, twirling a stick between his fingers with laughing skill and glee at their inability to equal him.

" All the people of that little place were moved and excited by this young man, in a manner beyond what might be accounted for by his coming from a strange country and a different people. He had another power, an unusual ability to bring his hearers into vivid sympathy with his own point of view. It repelled, in some cases, however, as strongly as it attracted, but whether in support or opposition, it was difficult to keep a cool head or a level judgment when confronted with him.

" All the people of all degrees were interested; women's eyes blazed and their cheeks were red with excitement; even the children of the village talked of what he had said to them; all the idle summer boarders trooped to hear him and all the artists longingly observed him and wanted to paint him.

" He told strange stories as ordinary people would mention the wonders of electricity, curious feats of legerdemain, and tales of monks who had lived one hundred, or one hundred and thirty years; but so-called occult societies drew down his most magnificent contempt. . . . He spoke of holy men who at a single glance converted hardened sinners and detected men's inmost thoughts. . . . But these things were trifles; always his thoughts turned back to his people. He lived to raise them up and make them better and had come this long way in the hope of gaining help to teach them, to be practically more efficient. We hardly knew what he needed: money, if money would do it ; tools, advice, new ideas. And for this he was willing to die to-morrow. . . .

" His great heroine was the dreadful Rani of the Indian Mutiny, who led her troops in person. . . . Whenever he mentioned the Rani he would weep, with tears streaming down his face. ' That woman was a goddess,' he said, ' a Devi. When overcome, she fell on her sword and died like a man.'

" In quoting from the Upanishads his voice was most musical. He would quote a verse in Sanskrit with intonations and then translate it into beautiful English, of which he had a wonderful command. And, in his mystical religion, he seemed perfectly and unquestionably happy.

" . . . . And yet, when they gave him money, it seemed as if some injury had been done him and some disgrace put upon him. ' Of all the worries I have ever had,' he said, as he left us, ' the greatest has been the care of this money!' His horrified reluctance to take it haunted us. He could not be made to see why he might not wander on in this country, as in his own, without touching a medium of exchange, which he considered disgraceful, and the pain he showed when it was made clear to him that without money he could not even move, hung round us for days after he left, as if we had hurt some innocent thing or had wounded a soul. . . . And we saw him leave us after that one little week of knowing him, with the fear that clutches the heart when a beloved, gifted, passionate child fares forth, unconscious, in an untried world."

This beautiful and interesting description of the Swami is only one out of hundreds that were written of him at the time. All his friends recognised in him "A Grand Seigneur" as Mrs. Leggett so aptly remarks. And this lady says, "In all my experience

I have met but two celebrated personages that could make one feel perfectly at ease without themselves for an instant losing their own dignity,—one the German Emperor, the other, Swami Vivekananda.'' Truly he was, as the American papers spoke of him, ''The Lordly Monk.''

Surveying the history of his work, one sees Swami Vivekananda moving through the West as some mighty, glorious and effulgent light. A Plato in thought, a modern Savonarola in his fearless outspokenness, and adored as a Master and as a Prophet, the Swami moved amongst his disciples as some great Bodhisattva amongst his devotees. Some looked upon him even as a Buddha, others as a Christ, some as a Rishi of the Upanishads, whilst others as a Sankaracharya; and all regarded him as the embodiment of the Highest Consciousness. And certainly, when one listens to the words that were heralded in the tense stillness of that hour which followed his reception at the Parliament of Religions, one can only think of him as one speaking with Authority, having realised the Divinity he preached. His hands, raised in continual benediction, his voice, murmuring or thundering, as it might be, the Gospel of the Highest Consciousness, his face beaming with love and goodwill, Swami Vivekananda lives in the memory of America as the Man with a Message for the West, ''One who walked with God.''

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THE LIFE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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VOL. II

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
MAYAVATI, ALMORA, HIMALAYAS

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

XXVI

BACK TO LONDON AND A TOUR OF THE CONTINENT

On April 15, 1896, Swami Vivekananda left New York for London. A pleasant surprise awaited him there. Swami Saradananda had arrived from Calcutta on April 1 and was the guest of Mr. E. T. Sturdy. For several years the Swami had not seen any of his Gurubhâis. So his meeting with Swami Saradananda was an event of great joy. Swami Saradananda brought all the news from India. He told his brother-monk about the monastery in Alambazar and of every one of the Gurubhâis. The Swami was full of plans at the time which he communicated to his brother-monk who was lost in wonder at his indefatigable energy and his apostolic fervour.

The Swami himself foresaw the success that lay before him on his second visit to England. All who had known him during his previous sojourn in London welcomed him back most cordially. Together with Swami Saradananda he made his home in St. George's Road, as the guest of Miss Muller and Mr. Sturdy. Soon he found himself teaching privately and preaching publicly; and the fame of his personality and utterances travelled wide. In a short time many persons of distinction, students of comparative religion and earnest seekers after truth were visiting his quarters and he was introduced to many new people who became his followers. He talked to them of the philosophies of India and their relation to modern life and explained to them the various forms of Yoga, and gathered round him a considerable number of people desirous of seriously studying the problem of human existence in their light.

In the beginning of May, 1896, the Swami began his regular classes, lecturing mostly on Jnâna Yoga, or the Path of Wisdom. Towards the end of May, he inaugurated a series of Sunday lectures in one of the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water-Colours, in Picadilly. The subjects were, "The Necessity of Religion," "A Universal Religion," and "The Real and the Apparent Man." These three lectures proving a great success, another course was arranged for in Princes' Hall for Sunday afternoons from the end of June to the middle of July. Among these lectures were "Bhakti Yoga," "Renunciation," and "Realisation." Besides these, the Swami held regularly every week five classes at which the attendance was uniformly good, and on Friday evenings a question-and-answer class, which was especially educative. In his first series of class lectures he dealt mainly with the history of the Aryan race, its developments, its religious advance, and the diffusion of its religious influence. Besides his class lectures on Jnâna Yoga, he gave a course of lessons on Râja Yoga. Then followed a series of discourses on Bhakti Yoga. Shorthand reports of these lectures were taken down by Mr. Goodwin.

But all these classes and Sunday lectures and interviews did not by any means cover the whole of the work the Swami was doing in England. He lectured also in many drawing-rooms, and at several well-known clubs. At the invitation of Mrs. Annie Besant he spoke at her lodge in Avenue Road, St. John's Wood, on Bhakti. He also delivered an address on "The Hindu Idea of Soul" at the residence of Mrs. Martin.

The Swami also spoke at Notting Hill Gate at the residence of Mrs. Hunt, as well as at Wimbledon, when a good deal of helpful discussion followed the lecture and several other meetings of a similar nature were arranged for. At the Sesame Club, he delivered an address on "Education." Swami Saradananda writing to the *Brahmavâdin* of June 6, says:

> " Swami Vivekananda has made a good beginning here. A large number of people attend his classes regularly and the lectures are most interesting. Canon Haweis, one of the leaders of the Anglican Church, came the other day and was much interested. He had seen the Swami before at the Chicago Fair, and loved him from that time. On Tuesday last the Swami lectured on Education at the Sesame Club. It is an important club organised by women for the education of their sex. In this he dealt with the old educational systems of India, pointed out clearly and impressively that the sole aim of the system was 'man-making' and not cramming, and compared it with the present system."

The Swami was warmly received at the residence of Canon Wilberforce, where a levee was held in his honour, in which many distinguished ladies and gentlemen took part.

Mr. Eric Hammond in recording his reminiscences of the Swami's visit to London and especially of a lecture before a club says:

> "On his arrival in London, Swami Vivekananda was welcomed in the quiet, thoughtful, semi-calculating way to which Londoners generally habituate themselves. Perhaps the Missionary, everywhere, is met by an atmosphere not exactly antagonistic, but, at the best, doubtful. That Swamiji recognised this element of doubt and of wonderment is certain, and it is certain too, that his winning personality cleared a way through it and found glad welcome in many hearts.
>
> "Clubs, societies, drawing-rooms opened their doors to him. Sets of students grouped themselves together in this quarter and that, and heard him at appointed intervals. His hearers, hearing him, longed to hear further.
>
> "At one of these meetings, at the close of his address, a white-haired and well-known Philosopher said to the Swami,

'You have spoken splendidly, sir, and I thank you heartily, but you have told us nothing new.' The lecturer's sonorous tones rang through the room in reply, 'Sir, I have told you the Truth. That, the Truth, is as old as the immemorial hills, as old as humanity, as old as the Creation, as old as the Great God. If I have told it in such words as will make you think, make you live up to your thinking, do I not do well in telling it?' The murmur of 'Hear! Hear!' and the louder clapping of hands showed how completely the Swami had carried his audience with him. One lady present on that occasion, and on many more, said, 'I have attended church services regularly all my life. Their monotony and lack of vitality had made them barren and distasteful. I went to them because others went and one hates to be peculiar. Since I heard the Swami, light has flooded into religion. It is real ; it lives ; it has a new glad meaning and is altogether transformed for me.'

" 'I will tell you how *I* came to know the Truth,' continued the Swami, and in the telling they learned something of the earth-life of Sri Ramakrishna ; the sublime simplicity of his character ; his indefatigable search for Truth in this religious phase and that; his discovery and his fine proclamation of it:—'Where I am, there the Truth is!'

" 'I found Truth,' said the Swami, 'because I had it in my heart already. Do not deceive yourselves. Do not imagine you will find it in one creed or in another creed. It is within you. Your creed will not give it to you, *you* must give it to your creed. Men and priests give it various names. They bid you believe one thing and another thing. Listen:—you have it within yourself, this pearl of great price. That which exists is one. Listen:—'Thou art That!'

"From first to last of this address he dwelt on the message of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. He had, he said, not one little word of his own to utter, not one infinitesimal thought of his own to unfold. Everything, every single thing, all he was himself, all he could be to us, all he might be to the world, came from that single source; from the pure soul, from the illimitable inspiration who, seated 'there in my beloved India, had solved the tremendous secret and bestowed the solution broadcast, ungrudgingly, with divine prodigality.'

"In passages of exquisite eloquence he dilated upon Sri Ramakrishna. Self was utterly forgotten, altogether ignored. 'I am what I am, and what I am is always due to him, whatever in me or in my words is good and true and eternal came to me from his mouth, his heart, his soul. Sri Ramakrishna is the spring of this phase of the earth's religious life, of its impulses and its activities. If I can show the world one glimpse of my Master I shall not live in vain.' "

One cannot read the above eloquent tribute of the Swami to his Master without noting a beautiful phase of his character—how even in the midst of his triumphs when he was himself hailed on all sides as Master, he again and again pointed out in all humility that he was only a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna at whose feet he had learned everything, that the credit of his teaching was not his but was due to his Master. It is only a true disciple that can be a true Master.

The Indian students resident in London naturally looked to him for guidance. The Swami endeared himself to them all by making them feel quite at home with him and helping them in various ways. And so when on July 18, a social conference of Indian residents in Great Britain and Ireland was held under the auspices of the London Hindu Association, it was he who was asked to preside. The subject of the discourse was, "The Hindus and Their Needs." At this meeting many English ladies and gentlemen were present.

The Swami worked indefatigably in these days, even more than he had done during his previous visit. It must be noted that even at that time in the midst of his multifarious activities he had devoted a good deal of his time in helping Mr. Sturdy in his translation of the "Nârada Sutras" on Bhakti Yoga. The book which was published about this time, with copious commentaries by the Swami, was deservedly popular.

One of the memorable events, during the Swami's stay in London, was his meeting with the celebrated Orientalist, Professor Max Müller of Oxford University, at his residence, by special invitation, on May 28. Of that pleasant experience the Swami himself wrote as follows to the *Brahmavâdin* on June 6:

". . . What an extraordinary man is Professor Max Muller! I paid a visit to him a few days ago. I should say, that I went to pay my respects to him, for whosoever loves Sri Ramakrishna, whatever be his or her sect, or creed, or nationality, my visit to that person I hold as a pilgrimage. . . .

"The Professor was first induced to inquire about the power behind, which led to sudden and momentous changes in the life of the late Keshub Chandra Sen, the great Brahmo leader; and since then, he has been an earnest student and admirer of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. 'Ramakrishna is worshipped by thousands today, Professor,' I said. 'To whom else shall worship be accorded, if not to such?' was his answer. The Professor was kindness itself, and asked Mr. Sturdy and myself to lunch with him. He showed us several colleges in Oxford, and the Bodleian Library. He also accompanied us to the railway station, and all this he did because, as he said, 'It is not every day one meets with a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa.'

"The visit was really a revelation to me. That nice little house, its setting of a beautiful garden, the silver-headed sage, with a face calm and benign, and forehead smooth as a child's in spite of seventy winters, and every line in that face speaking of a deep-seated mine of spirituality somewhere behind; that noble wife, the helpmate of his life through his long and arduous task of exciting interest, overriding opposition and contempt, and at last creating a respect for the thoughts of the sages of ancient India—the trees, the flowers, the calmness, and the clear sky—all these sent me back in imagination to the glorious days of ancient India, the days of our Brahmarshis and Râjarshis, the days of the great Vânaprasthas, the days of Arundhatis and Vasishthas.

"It was neither the Philologist nor the Scholar that I saw, but a soul that is every day realising its oneness with the Brahman, a heart, that is every moment expanding to reach oneness with the Universal. . . .

". . . And what love he bears towards India! I wish I had a hundredth part of that love for my own motherland. Endued with an extraordinary, and, at the same time, an intensely active mind, he has lived and moved in the world of Indian thought for fifty years or more, and watched the sharp interchange of light and shade in the interminable forest of Sanskrit literature with deep interest and heart-felt love, till they have all sunk into his very soul and coloured his whole being. Max Müller is a Vedântist of Vedântists. . . .

" 'When are you coming to India? Every heart there would welcome one who has done so much to place the thoughts of their ancestors in the true light,' I said. The face of the aged sage brightened up—there was almost a tear in his eye, a gentle nodding of the head, and slowly the words came out,—'I would not return then; you would have to cremate me there.' Further questions seemed an unwarrantable intrusion into realms wherein are stored the holy secrets of man's heart."

This letter was written by the Swami shortly after the Professor had written an article, from information gathered in India, concerning Sri Ramakrishna, which was to appear in the *Nineteenth Century,* entitled "A Real Mahâtman." Out of the enthusiasm with which the Swami had inspired him, he asked, "What are you doing to make him known to the world?" He was anxious to know more concerning the Master and said that he would be glad to write a larger and fuller account of his life and teachings, provided ampler facts and details were given him. The Swami at once commissioned Swami Saradananda to get into communication with India and to collect as much as was possible of the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna and of the facts concerning his life. This was done; and the Professor set to work at once and embodied them in a book which has been published under the title, "The Life and Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna." This book breathes a fervid devotional and yet critical spirit, and contains a number of the Master's sayings. It has aided materially in giving the Swami and his mission a firmer hold on the English-speaking world. The Swami and the Professor were frequent correspondents and fast friends. Only in matters of philosophical criticism did they sometimes differ.

The Swami was in the highest spiritual moods during his stay in London. Oftentimes he was all radiance and ecstasy, with infinite love and sympathy for everybody and everything, and nothing better illustrates this than a letter dated July 6, which he addressed to Mr. Francis H. Leggett in the endearing term of "Frankincense," and which reads as follows:

". . . Things are going on with me very well on this side of the Atlantic.

"The Sunday lectures were quite successful, so were the classes. The season has ended and I too am thoroughly exhausted. I am going to make a tour in Switzerland with Miss Muller. . . .

". . . Well, the work is growing silently yet surely in England. Almost every other man or woman came to me and talked about the work. This British Empire with all its drawbacks is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine, and they will spread all over the world. Of course, all great work is slow and the difficulties are too many, especially as we Hindus are the conquered race. Yet, that is the very reason why it is bound to work; for spiritual ideals have always come from the downtrodden. Jews overwhelmed the Roman Empire with their spiritual ideals. You will be pleased to know that I am also learning my lessons every day in patience and, above all, in sympathy. I think I am beginning to see the Divine, even inside the haughty, 'Anglo-Indians.' I think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very 'Devil' himself, if there were any.

"At twenty I was the most unsympathetic, uncompromising fanatic; I would not walk on the footpath, on the theatre-side of the streets in Calcutta. At thirty-three I can live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them. Is it degenerate? Or is it that I am broadening out into that Universal Love which is the Lord Himself? Again, I have heard that if one does not see the evil around him, he cannot do good work—he lapses into a sort of fatalism. I do not see that. On the other hand, my power of work is immensely increasing and becoming immensely effective. Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion. I am in one of these moods now, dear Francis, and am actually shedding tears of joy at the thought of your and Mrs. Leggett's love and kindness to me. I bless the day I was born. I have had so much of kindness and love here; and that Love Infinite that brought me into being, has guarded every one of my actions good or bad (don't be frightened), for what am I, what was I ever but a tool in His hands?—for whose service I have given up everything,—my beloved ones, my joy, my life. He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the Universe! What reason binds Him? He the Playful One is playing these tears and laughters over all parts of the play! Great fun, great fun, as Joe says.

"It is a funny world and the funniest chap you ever saw is He,—the Beloved Infinite! Fun, is it not? Brotherhood or playmatehood—a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world! Isn't it? Whom to praise, whom to blame, it is all His play! They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason, but this time He won't find me napping.

"I have learnt a thing or two: beyond, beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the 'Love,' the 'Beloved.' Aye, 'Sakê,' fill up the cup and we will be mad.

Yours ever in madness,
Vivekananda."

Here one has Swami Vivekananda himself. We see him in a mood, almost akin to the ecstasy of Saint Francis of Assisi, or bordering on that Divine Madness which possessed the Sufis of old, as he speaks of his Beloved Lord.

But returning to a consideration of the Swami's work it will be hard to gauge the import and character of it and the interest it created in London. It was more spiritual than organised. Many ministers of the Gospel and distinguished clergymen were caught up in the grandeur and the freshness of the thought he sent forth. Distinguished intellectual and society people were captivated until it seemed as if some great movement was about to be born in his name. He conferred the spirit, leaving the form to be organised later, in whatsoever way it might be possible. He often said of himself that he was not an organiser, but a preacher and a monk; and it is in this sense that his work in England must be regarded.

But apart from the public significance of the Swami's work in London, his second visit is memorable for, he made then some of the most valuable contacts of his life and gathered to his fold some of the most diligent and heroic workers and helpers in his cause. True, in his previous visit he had made acquaintances which ripened into friendship with such talented souls as Miss Henrietta Muller, Miss M. E. Noble, Mr. E. T. Sturdy and others, but now they became his disciples, ready to sacrifice everything for him and his cause. To this group were added two of his most faithful disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, of whom we shall often have occasion to speak later. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier met Swamiji soon after his arrival in London, having heard from a mutual friend that a Hindu preacher was going to hold classes on Eastern philosophy. Both of them were earnest students of religion and sought for the Highest Truth in various sects and creeds, but none of these satisfied the yearning of their souls. They were disappointed with the forms and theological dogmas which passed under the name of religion. So it was with expectant hearts that they came to listen to the exposition of a new religion from the lips of an "Indian Yogi." What was the surprise of the devoted couple to find on comparing notes that they, when hearing the Swami, had felt intuitively and simultaneously thus, "This is the man and this is the philosophy that we have been seeking in vain all through our life." What appealed to them most was, the Advaita philosophy. The very first time they met the Swami in private, the latter addressed Mrs. Sevier as "Mother,"—and asked her, "Would you not like to come to India? I will give you of my best realisations." From that day they looked upon the Swami not only as their Guru but as their own son. Thus was established a relationship which was to bring forth inestimable fruits in the fulfilment of one of the Swami's great missions to the West. Indeed, he held Sister Nivedita, J. J. Goodwin and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier as the fairest flowers of his work in England.

Exhausted with the strenuous exertions of his London work the Swami accepted the invitation of three of his more intimate friends for a tour and a holiday on the Continent. He was "as delighted as a child" at the prospect. Those who planned the Swami's holiday and accompanied him on his tour, were Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Sevier and Miss Henrietta Muller. For some time, they had been urging the Swami to rest for they felt that he could not endure much longer the strain of his work. Then, too, it was the holiday season for London in general; and many of the Swami's students and admirers were leaving the metropolis for seaside or mountain resorts. When the suggestion was made to him, the Swami readily assented. He was particularly eager to visit Switzerland. He said, "O! I long to see the snows and wander on the mountain paths!"

So in the afternoon of one of the last days in July, the Swami and his friends left London with the best wishes of all his students and disciples. Arriving at Dover, the party took passage to Calais. The English Channel, often choppy, chanced on this occasion to be comparatively calm. In order to break the long journey between Calais and Geneva the travellers spent the night in Paris. On the following day, they resumed their journey, arriving in excellent spirits at Geneva. The Hotel at which the party found accommodation overlooked the beautiful and peaceful lake. The cool invigorating air, the intense blue of the waters, the sky and the fields, the picturesqueness of the houses, and the novelty of things about him deeply appealed to the Swami.

Geneva is a great bathing-resort, and the Swami availed himself twice of the opportunity for full water bathing. A visit to the Castle of Chillon ended a three days' sojourn in this historic city. They originally intended to remain longer, but the programme was suddenly changed, and we next find the travellers in the far-famed retreat of Chamounix, some forty miles away. When they approached this place the grand spectacle of Mont Blanc opened up to view, presenting a vision which the Swami said he had not enjoyed even amidst the Himalayas. He cried out, "This is really wonderful! Here we are actually in the midst of the snows. In India the snows are so far distant. One walks for days and days amidst the mountains to come near them. But then, these are mere hills compared with those mighty peaks that tower on the borders of Tibet. Yet this is beautiful! Come! let us make the ascent of Mont Blanc." But the guides told them that only skilled mountaineers should attempt such a feat. This was a disappointment to the Swami, but as he gazed through the telescope and saw the appallingly steep ascents, he granted that it was impracticable. However, he was bent on crossing a glacier at all costs. Without this, he felt, his visit to Switzerland would be incomplete. Fortunately the famous Mer-de-Glace was within easy approach. Accordingly several days later, the party travelled on mules to the village whence the passage over the glacier begins. The actual expedition was not so pleasant as the Swami had anticipated. It was difficult to keep his footing, even though he admired the beautiful green tints of the crevasses. They were appallingly deep and so beyond reach. When the glacier proper is crossed a very steep ascent must be climbed to reach the village above. It was here that the Swami suffered from vertigo for the first time in his life. This vertigo made it very unsafe and he was glad when he reached the little chalet at the summit without any untoward accident.

The Swami observing the characteristics of the peasantry, remarked to his friends, "Why, these people in many of their manners and in their costumes remind me of the peasants in the hills of the Himalayas! Those long baskets that the people carry on their backs are exactly like those used in the mountainous districts of my country." It was in the Himalayas of Europe that those who were to be the founders of the Advaita Ashràma and dedicate their lives to it, heard for the first time of the Swami's longing to establish a monastery in the heart of his beloved Himalayas. He said, "O, I long for such a monastery where I can retire from the labours of my life and pass the rest of my days in meditation. It will be a centre for work and meditation, where my Indian and Western disciples can live together and them I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedânta to the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India." A thought, something akin to vision, crossed the minds of his disciples; and Mr. Sevier, speaking for himself and his wife, said, "How nice it would be, Swamiji, if this could be done. We must have such a monastery!" At the time, it was only a passing remark, but as the months went by, that stray remark made in the heights of the Alps, was seen to have been prophetic, for so deep had the idea sunk into the hearts of those disciples that the Swami's great desire was fulfilled through their practical help and co-operation.

From Chamounix, the travellers visited the village of Little Saint Bernard. High above rises the famous Saint Bernard Pass, on the crest of which stands the celebrated hospice of the Augustinian monks, the highest inhabited spot in Europe. At the request of Miss Muller, the party next wandered on to an interesting retreat some miles away, where a sojourn of two weeks was made. The Swami was at his best in this village, nestling in the Alps. On all sides rose the snow-capped peaks; all about was the silence and the peace of village life. No rude note of worldliness crept in here. It was here that the Swami enjoyed some of the most lucid and luminous spiritual moments of his life. He seemed far, far away from all worldly concerns. The world and all thought of work were forgotten entirely. He was not even the Teacher, but the silent, meditating monk of old. Many times he walked silently on the mountain paths and his friends seemed to be caught up with him in a world of meditation and of peace. One of those who were with him in this wondrous fortnight says, "There seemed to be a great light about him, and a great stillness and peace. Never have I seen the Swami to such advantage. He seemed to communicate spirituality by a look or with a touch. One could almost read his thoughts which were of the highest, so transfigured had his personality become!"

Two weeks of this quiet life completely restored the Swami. There was only one incident of a slightly disturbing character. He had been walking one morning with his friends, reciting and translating passages from the Upanishads, creating in the Alps an Indian atmosphere. On this morning, lost in reverent contemplation he gradually dropped behind. After some short time, they saw him approaching rapidly, calling out in great excitement, "I have been saved by the grace of the Lord! I nearly fell over a precipice. I was walking along, planting my alpenstock firmly on the ground. Suddenly it broke through into a deep crevice and I almost fell over the precipice. Certainly it was only a miracle that saved me!" His friends were greatly agitated when they heard this and congratulated themselves and the Swami over his marvellous escape. Thenceforth they took special care never again to leave him alone.

On the way homewards, there was a little mountain chapel. As the Swami saw it, he said quietly, "Do let us offer some flowers at the feet of the Virgin!" His face shone with great tenderness and he went forth, one of the party accompanying him, and gathered some Alpine flowers. "Offer them at the feet of the Virgin," he said to Mrs. Sevier, "as a token of my gratitude and devotion." And with a strange note of religious certainty, he added, "For She also is the Mother." He would have offered them himself, but feared that the fact that he was not a Christian might cause trouble.

At this out-of-the-way village in Switzerland the Swami received news, which changed the course of his continental tour; it was in the form of an urgent letter from the well-known Orientalist, Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel. He had written to the Swami's London address, cordially inviting him to visit him at his residence in Kiel. The Professor had been studying the Swami's lectures and utterances, and found in him an original thinker and a spiritual genius. Deeply interested as he was in the

Vedânta philosophy, and having recently returned from Hindusthan itself, he naturally desired to meet the Swami to discuss philosophical questions with him. The Swami therefore made plans to go to Kiel before returning to England. But his hosts insisted that he should complete his Swiss tour before going to Kiel, and arranged that he should also see something of Germany on the way. Urgent business, however, compelled Miss Muller to leave the party at Lucerne, the destination next in view.

At Lucerne, visits were paid to all the places of interest and, with the exception of Mr. Sevier, all made the ascent of Mount Rigi by the mountain railway, a fascinating experience, the view from the summit commanding one of the finest snow vistas in the world. He was now restless to proceed onwards; and so bidding farewell to his disciple, Miss Muller, he and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier journeyed to Zermatt, one of the beauty spots of Switzerland, where he hoped to climb the Kornergrat and to secure the view of the Matterhorn. But of the party only Mr. Sevier succeeded in reaching the summit, the air being too rarefied for the other two. The next move was made to Schaffhausen, where the Falls of the Rhine are seen at their best.

From Schaffhausen the three tourists went to Heidelberg, the centre of one of the greatest German Universities, where two days were spent. A visit to the University and the castle above the city was made. Then on to Coblenz! Here a halt was made for the night, and on the next day the party boarded a steamer to journey up the Rhine as far as the city of Cologne, where the travellers expected to stay several days. The Swami marvelled at the great cathedral and attended a service there, and visited its sanctuary.

Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had planned to take their guest from Cologne direct to Kiel, but he was anxious to see the great city of Berlin. His hosts, eager to please him, made a large detour, intending not only to visit Berlin, but Dresden as well. The Swami was struck with the general prosperity of the country and with the large number of its cities built after the modern style. Berlin with its wide streets, fine monuments and beautiful parks made him compare it favourably even with Paris itself.

When he was informed that their next destination was Dresden, he hesitated saying, "Professor Deussen will be expecting us. We must not defer our visit longer." Accordingly the party proceeded to Kiel. A very interesting account of this visit recorded by Mrs. Sevier who, together with her husband, was also invited to be the guests of the Deussen family, is given here in full:

". . . My recollection of Kiel, a town in Germany, which is beautifully situated on the Baltic, is bright with agreeable memories of a pleasant day spent in the society of Dr. Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy in the University there,—a man of rare philosophical grasp, standing foremost in the rank of European Sanskrit scholars.

"On hearing that the Swami had arrived at the Hotel, the Professor immediately sent a note requesting his company at breakfast on the following day, courteously including my husband and myself in the invitation. Punctually at 10 o'clock the next morning we presented ourselves at his house, and were ushered into the Library, where we received a cordial reception from Dr. and Mrs. Deussen who were expecting us. After a few preliminary inquiries regarding the travels and plans of Swamiji, I noticed the Professor directing his eyes to some volumes lying open on the table, and with a scholar's appreciation of learning, he soon turned the conversation on books. . . . He considered the system of the Vedânta as founded on the Upanishads and Vedânta Sutras, with Sankaracharya's commentaries, some of the most majestic structures and valuable products of the genius of man in his search for Truth, and that the highest and purest morality is the immediate consequence of the Vedânta. . . .

"It seems, the Professor added, that a movement is being made back towards the fountain-head of spirituality, a movement that will in the future, probably make India, the spiritual leader of the nations, the highest and greatest spiritual influence on earth.

"The Swami interested himself in some translations Dr. Deussen was making, and a discussion arose on the precise significance and correct understanding of various obscure passages. The former pointed out that clearness of definition was of primary, and elegance of diction of very secondary importance. The vigorous and lucid interpretations given by the Oriental exegetist with such firmness of conviction, and yet such delicacy of perception, eventually quite won over the German savant. . . ."

But to return to the narration of the day spent in Kiel. Some time during the day, the Professor found the Swami turning over the pages of a poetical work. He spoke to him but got no response. When the Swami came to know of it afterwards, he apologised, saying that he was so absorbed in reading that he had not heard him. The Professor was not satisfied with this explanation until, in the course of conversation the Swami quoted and interpreted verses from the book. Dr. Deussen was dumbfounded, and like the Maharaja of Khetri asked the Swami how he could accomplish such a feat of memory. Thereupon the conversation turned upon the subject of the concentration of the mind as practised by the Indian Yogi, and that with so much perfection that, the Swami said from personal knowledge, in that state he would be unconscious even if a piece of burning charcoal were placed on his body.

At this time, there was an Exhibition in Kiel, which Dr. Deussen insisted that the Swami must visit and offered to take him there. So immediately after tea, the Swami's party accompanied their host to the

Exhibition and some time was spent in studying the various arts and industries of Germany. Partaking of light refreshments there the party returned to the hotel where the Swami was staying. The Professor suggested that the Swami should see the objects of interest in and about the city, and it was decided that on the next day they would all make an excursion to some of the outlying districts, notably to the famous harbour of Kiel, opened only a few days previously by the Kaiser.

About six weeks had been spent in holiday touring and the Swami felt that he could now take up his London work again with renewed vigour. Accordingly, he asked Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to make plans for returning immediately. Dr. Deussen had hoped that the Swami would prolong his visit so that he would have opportunities to discuss many philosophical matters with him in the quiet retreat of his own residence, where his treasure-room of learning and of books would have added much to the interest of their discussions. He tried to induce the Swami to remain if only for a few days, but when he was told that the Swami was anxious to put his work on a solid basis before returning to India which he intended to do in the near future the Professor understood and said, "Well, then, Swami, I shall meet you in Hamburg, and thence, *via* Holland, we shall both journey to London, where I hope to spend many happy hours with you."

At Hamburg Professor Deussen joined them. The party, with its additional member, went to Amsterdam, for three days, during which time they visited the art galleries, the museums, and other places of interest.

The channel crossing was a most unpleasant voyage, fortunately soon over. Professor Deussen made his home with friends in St. John's Wood, while the Swami accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Sevier to their home in Hampstead. The Swami was much improved in health and felt that he could meet the demands of his work with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

Having initiated Swami Saradananda by personal example and instructions into the manner and matter of the preaching work that he would be called upon to take up, the Swami at the repeated requests of his disciples and students of Vedânta in America, had sent him to New York, at the end of June, in the company of Mr. J. J. Goodwin. The sweet and gentle personality of the new teacher and his masterly exposition of Hinduism, at once drew to him large numbers of men and women in America, "who were attracted to the Vedânta by the other Swami's eloquence and example, but who had not had sufficient opportunity for personal contact to become, what one would call, *established* in it." Soon after his arrival he was invited to be one of the teachers in the Greenacre Conference of Comparative Religions, where he began his work with a lecture on Vedânta, and classes on the Yoga Systems, under the large Pine tree known as the "Swami's Pine," which had served as a canopy and open pulpit for Swami Vivekananda two years ago. At the close of the Conference, Swami Saradananda was invited to lecture in Brooklyn, New York and Boston. During his tour on the Continent, the Swami was delighted with the news of his brother disciple's immediate success and constantly growing influence, and to hear, from private letters, that the student's expectations of their new teacher were fully satisfied.

After a few days' stay with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in Hampstead, the Swami commenced his work by giving two drawing-room lectures within the first two weeks at Airlie Lodge, Ridgeway Gardens, the residence of Miss Muller at Wimbledon. On the first occasion Mr. J. F. Schwam presided and the room was crowded, the majority of attendants being society ladies. The Swami spoke on "Vedânta as a Factor in Civilisation." The lecture was a great success and it was followed by the opening of systematic classes in which the Swami gave both private and general instruction, teaching many the principles of Râja Yoga and the practices of meditation..

His public lectures in England were mostly devoted to the exposition of the philosophical portions of the Vedânta, known as Jnâna Yoga. In order to grant the general public an opportunity of hearing the Swami, Mr. E. T. Sturdy had engaged a large room at 39, Victoria Street with ample accommodation. Close by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had taken a flat, at 14, Grey Coat Gardens, Westminster, for the Swami and his Gurubhai, Swami Abhedananda, who had just arrived from India at the urgent call of the Swami to help him in his London work. The Swami did all in his power to impress the new-comer with the responsibilities of his new life. Day after day he trained him so that he would be able to carry on the work alone. He was thinking of sailing for India at the end of the year and was therefore eager to leave behind a worker, fitted both spiritually and intellectually to take his place.

At this time he was writing also to his Indian disciples giving them instructions on various subjects, keeping them informed of the progress of his London work, which was growing apace. He was hopeful and enthusiastic, stating that with twenty earnest-minded and capable preachers of Vedânta he could convert the West in as many years. He realised the vast importance of his work so far as its influence on the Indian public was concerned, for he wrote, "One blow struck outside of India is equal to a hundred thousand struck within."

Professor Deussen often visited the Swami, discussing with him the principles of the Vedânta and gaining from him a much clearer insight into the whole body of Vedânta thought. He was in thorough agreement with the Swami when the latter pointed out to him the difficulties that lay in the way of a thorough understanding of the Vedânta metaphysics by Western minds, the trouble resting in the fact that the Western philosopher was apt to regard Indian idealism through the lens of preconceived ideas. And as he came to know the Swami more intimately, he understood that one must become de-Occidentalised, as it were, in order to master the spirit of the Hindu philosophical systems, for these were not so much systems of logic as methods of spiritual vision. For two whole weeks, during his stay in London, the Professor was with the Swami, either by day or by night. At the same time Professor Max Müller of Oxford was in communication with the Swami.

From Switzerland the Swami had written to an Indian disciple, "There is a big London work waiting for me next month," and so it proved to be. The most notable feature of his work during the months of October and November, was his delivery of the message of the Vedânta both in its most practical and highest metaphysical aspects. He opened his lecture course with a masterly exposition of that most abstruse subject, the Hindu theory of Mâyâ, to define which has not only confounded the best Sanskrit scholars of the West but puzzled even the ancient philosophers of his own land. In fact, the burden of all his subsequent lectures in London was the idea of Mâyâ. How successfully he has achieved this most difficult task will be apprehended by everyone who carefully studies his lectures on "Mâyâ and Illusion," "Mâyâ and the Evolution of the Conception of God," "Mâyâ and Freedom," "The Absolute and Manifestation." In his other lectures delivered during the period which followed, such as "God in Everything," "Realisation," "Unity in Diversity," "The Freedom of the Soul," as also in the last series of four lectures known as "The Practical Vedânta," one sees the Swami full of the one luminous thought of the Advaita, that there is but One Infinite Existence, the Sat-Chit-Anandam, the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute,—and That is the innermost nature of man, and, as such, the soul of man is, in essence, eternally free and divine, all manifestations being but the varying expressions of this nature of the Soul. No better exposition of a rationalistic religion,—upon which, the Swami believed, depended the salvation of Europe,—could be conceived than these unique presentments of the Highest Truth. Extraordinarily equipped as he was to garb the greatest metaphysical truths in a poetic language of wonderful depth and profundity, he made the dizzy heights of Advaita appear like a land rich with the verdure of noblest human aspiration and fragrant with the flowers of finest emotions. The tremendous power of his personality behind his utterances, made every word fall like a thunderbolt upon his audience. In one of his lectures on Mâyâ he rose to such heights of feeling that his whole audience were transported out of themselves, so much so that they lost all sense of personality, as it were, being merged in the consciousness of the Highest for the time being. In such moments as these, his hearers admitted, a teacher can transmit his realisation even by a spoken word and make his pupils touch the borderlands of the Infinite. All these lectures were delivered on the spur of the moment, without the least preparation.

During the months of October and November the Swami also received numerous invitations to lecture in private drawing-rooms, in fashionable clubs and to select audiences in London and Oxford. He made a friend of Canon Wilberforce who received him at his residence in Westminster with great cordiality and marked attention, and became a keen student of the Vedânta philosophy. Several times he spoke before the Sesame Club, and some of the members became his ardent followers. Among many other celebrities with whom he came in contact were Mr. Frederick H. Myers, the well-known author of several psychological works, the Rev. John Page, Hopps, the Nonconformist minister, Mr. Moncure D. Conway, the Positivist and peace advocate, Dr. Stanton Coit, the Rev. Charles Voysey, the Theistic leader, Mr. Edward Carpenter, the author of "Towards Democracy," and many other persons of culture and enlightenment. Not only many Nonconformist clergymen, but even high clericals of the Anglican Church, were deeply impressed with the principles of the Vedânta; and on several occasions the Swami himself went to churches where he listened to sermons, the ideas of which were characteristic of that advanced religious thought which he had propagated.

At this time the Swami was occupied with "writing something big on the Vedânta philosophy," as he said in a letter, and was "busy collecting passages from the various Vedas bearing on the Vedânta in its threefold aspect." Besides numerous private interviews, many classes a week, and constant writing and public lecturing, he was planning for his work in India and giving instructions accordingly to his Indian disciples and Gurubhâis. He was unable to fulfil his long-cherished desire of leaving a systematised statement of his philosophy in book form before departing for India. It, however, was a matter for satisfaction to him to see that there was a great demand for his published lectures and class lessons especially for his "Râja Yoga," the first edition of which had been sold out by October, and that there were already standing orders for several hundreds when the second edition went to press in November. But the idea of writing books on Hindu philosophy never left him, and even as late as January 1901, when he came to Mâyâvati, he said to his disciples that he was seriously thinking of retiring from public life to devote the rest of his days to writing books in a secluded spot,—and no other place he could think of, he said, was more suitable for this than Mayavati.

All this work was beginning to tax him; he was growing more and more world-weary. The old Paramahamsa spirit which feels the bondage of any work,—even that of doing good to others,—as unbearable, possessed him at times and he longed to throw it off and to be merged in the Infinite Peace. Even as early as August 23, he had written from Lucerne in Switzerland:

> "I have begun the work, let others work it out. So you see, to set the work going I had to defile myself by touching money and property, for a time. Now I am sure my part of the work is done and I have no more interest in Vedânta or any philosophy in the world, or in the work itself. I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, this world.
>
> "Even its religious utility is beginning to pall on me. . . . These works and doing good and so forth, are just a little exercise to cleanse the mind. I have had enough of it. . . ."

But though the Swami felt and wrote in this fashion, the Will of the Lord was otherwise. He was yet to do a world of work in his own land in the re-statement and re-valuation of the Sanâtana Dharma. The Swami had been writing from England, even as he did formerly from America, to the effect that his disciples must learn to stand on their own feet, and must be filled with his own enthusiasm and spread the new light all over India. And again from Switzerland he wrote, "Do not be afraid. Great things are going to be done, my children. Take heart. . . . In the winter I am going back to India and will try to set things on their feet there. Work on, brave hearts, fail not,—no saying nay; work on,—the Lord is behind the work. Mahâsakti is with you. . . ." And in India the work was being pushed on by his disciples. The *Brahmavâdin* was disseminating the Swami's ideas broadcast, and instilling into the hearts of the people the great ideals of Hinduism.

One of the events which satisfied the Swami immensely, was the success of the maiden speech of Swami Abhedananda, whom he had designated to speak in his stead at a club in Bloomsbury Square, on October 27. The new monk gave an excellent address on the general character of the Vedânta teaching; and it was noticed that he possessed spiritual fervour and possibilities of making a good speaker. A description of this occasion, written by Mr. Eric Hammond, reads:

> "Some disappointment awaited those that had gathered that afternoon. It was announced that Swamiji did not intend to speak, and Swami Abhedananda would address them instead.
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> "An overwhelming joy was noticeable in the Swami in his scholar's success. Joy compelled him to put at least some of itself into words that rang with delight unalloyed. It was the joy of a spiritual father over the achievement of a well-beloved son, a successful and brilliant student. The Master was more than content to have effaced himself in order that his Brother's

opportunity should be altogether unhindered. The whole impression had in it a glowing beauty quite indescribable. It was as though the Master thought and knew his thought to be true: 'Even if I perish on this plane, my message will be sounded through these dear lips and the world will hear it. . . .' He remarked that this was the first appearance of his dear Brother and pupil, as an English-speaking lecturer before an English audience, and he pulsated with pure pleasure at the applause that followed the remark. His selflessness throughout the episode burnt itself into one's deepest memory."

At this time the Swami was also delighted to hear frequently of Swami Saradananda's success in America chiefly through the newspaper cuttings sent to him. Following upon his teaching at the Greenacre Conference, Swami Saradananda had gone to deliver lectures at Boston, Brooklyn and New York, and everywhere had made many friends and won the love and esteem of earnest followers. He then settled down in New York to carry on the Vedânta movement in a regular and well-organised way. There was no doubt that he was making an impression among some of the best people in New York and its environs, as the reports of his work at this time testify.

Moreover, Miss Waldo whom the Swami regarded as his ablest and best-prepared student, had at his express desire organised classes of her own and was conducting them with great credit. Among her other labours, during the absence of the Swami Saradananda in Cambridge for November and December, she conducted the classes in the Vedânta Society in New York.

That the interest in the Vedânta philosophy went on steadily increasing in America since the Swami left for England, and that he was remembered with endearing love and gratitude by his students, will be evidenced by the following letter written to the editor of the *Brahmavâdin* by Helen F. Huntington on October 14, 1896, from Gainesville, Georgia:

"I am sure you will be glad to know that the peaceable fruits of Swami Vivekananda's teachings have been all the while increasing; his influence is like sunshine—so quiet, so potent and far-reaching. It will always be a marvel to us that an Oriental could take such a firm hold on us Occidentals, trained as we have been by long habits of thought and education to opposing views. . . . Our interest is not of the noisy effervescent quality often incited by passing fads;—today it is stronger and deeper than ever before, and all of the Swami's followers endeavour earnestly to spread the truth according to the various opportunities afforded to them,—some quietly within domestic circles, others more prominently, as the case may be. And who is able to estimate the measure of man's silent influence? . . .

"Even down here, a thousand miles or more from the scene of the Swami's work, I hear mention of his name. . . . I hope the time is not far distant when the Vedânta will be as well known here as in New York City. . . .

"It is impossible not to wish for Swami Vivekananda's return to our midst, as he has endeared himself so deeply to all of us. As he said of his Guru, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, 'His presence was a blessing to everyone, saint and sinner,' so was his own life among us; for he influenced us to better living and brotherly kindness to all men. . . ."

The Swami had great confidence that the work in America would not suffer by his absence in England. His friends and disciples corresponded with him regularly and he saw from the tone in which they addressed him that they were heart and soul in their enthusiasm for the movement.

During the month of October, 1896, the Swami's mind turned more and more towards India. He had been thinking for some time of returning thither and had spoken accordingly to some of his more intimate friends, particularly to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. But there was nothing definite, his remarks being only of a passing character. He had written also in a tentative way to Mrs. Bull concerning his intention. In reply he received a letter, asking if he would be willing to accept a large sum of money with which to further his work in India, especially with regard to the founding of a permanent home, as the headquarters of the brotherhood in Calcutta. The Swami replied a week before his sailing for India, to the effect that he was profoundly grateful for the generous offer, but that he did not feel at the time that he should encumber himself with such responsibilities, as he wished to commence his work on a small scale in India, and that until he had found his bearings he could not accept her kindness. He promised, however, to write details from India.

It was after one of the class lectures towards the middle of November that the Swami called Mrs. Sevier aside and asked her quite suddenly to purchase four tickets immediately for the most convenient steamer from Naples, as he desired to shorten the sea-voyage by travelling to Naples *via* the Continent. It was a surprise to her, even though she knew that the Swami intended sailing. Both she and her husband, who were to accompany him to help in his work in India and lead the Vânaprastha life, accelerated their preparations. It was decided that they would visit some of the important cities in Italy *en route*. That same day they secured berths on a new steamer of the North German Lloyd, which was to leave Naples for Ceylon on December 16. Subsequently however, they were transferred to the steamer "Printz Regent Luitpold," as the new steamer was not ready to sail on that day.

The Swami at once wrote to his Madras followers informing them of his coming, stating casually that he wanted to establish two centres, one in Calcutta, the other in Madras, and that Mr. and Mrs. Sevier intended founding a Himalayan Centre. He added, "We will begin work with these three centres; and later on, we will get to Bombay and Allahabad. And from these points, if the Lord be pleased, we will invade not only India, but send bands of preachers to every country in the world." His mind was full of plans, and he discussed them enthusiastically with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. He seemed to be consumed with the desire to deliver his message to his motherland, and they in their turn anticipated great results, and made up their minds to renounce the world and dedicate themselves to the furtherance of his mission and to the practical realisation of those of his teachings which they had made their own. So they made quick preparations to settle their domestic affairs, and in a short time had disposed of their belongings consisting, among other things, of ornaments, pictures, books and furniture. Like true disciples they handed over to their Guru the whole of the proceeds of the sale. They took rooms elsewhere so as to be ready to start whensoever he wished. His devoted disciple, Mr. Goodwin, who had taken the vow of a Brahmachârin and served the Swami as his secretary and personal attendant, was also to accompany him. Miss Muller with her lady-companion, Miss Bell, was preparing to follow him at a later date. In his plans of work in India the Swami, as a true patriot, did not forget to plan to help the women of his own land. Simultaneously with his idea of founding the three monastic centres for the training of young men as preachers, he had thought of starting an institution for the education of girls on national lines, producing not only ideal wives and mothers, but Brahmachârinis working for the improvement of their own sex. The Swami had inspired Miss Muller with the idea of being of service to the women of India, and she had gladly promised to support the proposed educational institution for Hindu girls. He had also in mind to bring Miss Margaret Noble to India in due time in order to put her in charge of his intended work for women. Thus from all points of view the prospects of launching a successful campaign in India seemed bright with a glorious promise, and the Swami was transported with joy at seeing that the dearest dream of his life—the rejuvenation of his motherland was going to be fulfilled at last.

When his English students came to know that the Swami was to leave in the middle of December, they were filled with sadness. It was decided to hold a farewell reception in his honour. The chief organiser of this final meeting was that indefatigable worker, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, than whom the Swami had few better friends. It was he and Mr. Goodwin who drew up the farewell address and sent invitations to all of the Swami's friends and followers.

On December 13, the final Sunday before the Swami's departure from London, the gathering at the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours, in Piccadilly, where the meeting was held, was enormous. Scores of people from all parts of the city, and some even from the distant suburbs poured into the hall, until there was hardly standing-room. Swami Abhedananda was there. He had now made a place for himself in the huge metropolis, and it was to him that the gathering unconsciously turned for solace on this day of loss. The Swami's heart was full when he entered the hall amidst a stillness which spoke eloquently of the bond between him and his London followers. Mr. Eric Hammond eloquently describes this farewell gathering in the following words:

"It was Sunday in London, when shops were shut, business at a standstill, and the city streets silenced for a while from some at least of the rattle and the rumble of their heavier traffic. Londoners wore their Sunday clothing, their Sunday bearing and manner, and grey, subdued, and semi-silent folk wended their way to church and chapel. This afternoon the friends of Swamiji were to say 'Good-bye' to him whose coming had meant so much to them. In the hall of meeting, dedicated to the use of the artists, paintings hung upon the walls; palms, flowers and ferns decorated the platform from which Swamiji would utter his final speech in England's great metropolis to the British people. All sorts and conditions of men were there, but all alike were filled by one desire: to see him, to hear him, even if may be, to touch his garment once again.

"On the platform musicians and singers at stated intervals 'discoursed sweet sounds.' Speeches illustrating the esteem and affection which Swamiji had won, were made by men and by women. Salvoes of applause punctuated and followed them. Many were silent, tongue-tied and sad at heart. Tears were very near to some eyes. Grey and gloom without were intensified and deepened by grey and gloom within. One form, one figure, fought and triumphed over sorrow; arrayed in garments, glistening as of amber, Swamiji passed among the people, like a living shaft of sunshine.

" 'Yes, Yes,' he said, 'we shall meet again; we *shall*.' "

The Chairman of the meeting, Mr. E. T. Sturdy, presented an address to the Swami. The Swami was much moved and replied in terms of great endearment and glowing spiritual fervour. He pointed out the fact that history repeats itself and that Christianity had been rendered possible only by the Roman peace. "He perhaps meant" comments Sister Nivedita, "that there would yet be seen a great army of Indian preachers in the West, reaping the harvest he had sown so well, and making ready in their turn new harvests, for the distant reaping of the future." And above all his public utterances at the time of his departure, rings out that triumphant statement which he made to Mr. Hammond, "I may even find it good to get out of this body, to throw it off like a disused garment. But I shall never cease preaching and helping mankind until all shall come to know the Highest Truth." It is remarkable how, here and there, ever since his death, persons who had never seen him in his lifetime, are now feeling his spiritualising influence by communing with him through the great utterances he has left behind. True, he visited London again, but not in the capacity of a public teacher, as at that time other fields were calling him, in the United States of America. And there was yet work to be done in India.

The Swami's last lecture in London on the "Advaita Vedânta" was the fitting culmination of the whole series, as it speaks the final word on the highest stage of Realisation. Reporting this lecture, but particularly making a survey of the influence created by the Swami, a distinguished correspondent to the "Indian Mirror" writes as follows on December 14, from London:

"The last lecture on the Advaita philosophy was given by the Swami Vivekananda to a crowded audience, which was anxious not to lose this last opportunity of hearing him for some time to come, on December 10, 1896. The regularity with which these thoughtful people have attended the Swami's lectures in London, is an indication of the serious attention which they have given to the whole of the present Vedânta exposition—an exposition which, in the hands of a personality, which many have learned to very deeply respect, and others to love, finds an application to every phase of Western life, as well as to that of Eastern life, where its first presentment was made. It is this liberal and wise interpretation, which has brought people of many varying shades of opinion, including several of the clergy of the Church of England, to group themselves together in an effort to make the Swami's teachings as widely known as possible. . . .

"A deep spiritual teaching is not likely to move rapidly at first, but steadily the Eastern thought is being more and more understood through an army of conscientious and industrious translators, and a teacher like the Swami Vivekananda comes and gives a living force to this lore, wrapped up in books, and also adjusts discrepancies. Yet, notwithstanding all that has been done by various scholars, the majority, probably, of those people who certainly may be called refined and educated, who have attended the Swami's lectures, have now had their attention called for the first time to the great treasures of Universal Thought and Wisdom, which India holds through the ages in trust, as it were, for the world. . . . If the Swami Vivekananda's work may be called a missionary effort, it may be contrasted with most of the other missionary efforts of the day by its not having produced any bitterness, by its not having given rise to a single instance of ill-feeling or sectarianism. The reason of this is simple, and great is its strength. The Swami is not a sectarian; he is the promoter of Religion, not of one religion only. The exponents of single points in the vast field of religion can find nothing in him to fight.

". . . Amongst those who attended the farewell reception were several old officers and civilians who have spent years of their life in India, and who cannot be presumed to be carried away by an enthusiasm for a particular exponent, a philosophy, or a people of whom they know nothing."

Many people after hearing the Swami in London declared that the manner and matter of his exposition of the Vedânta philosophy revealed to them an entirely new and encouraging view of life and that eternal substratum beneath it. Thus writes Miss M. E. Noble who afterwards became known as Sister Nivedita:

"To not a few of us the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us have been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair, with regard to Religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity has become impossible to us, and we had no tool, such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of Reality, in our faith. To these, the Vedânta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intuitions. 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light' . . . .

". . . It was the Swami's *'I am God'* that came as something always known, only never said before. . . . Yet again, it was the Unity of Man, that was the touch needed to rationalise all previous experiences and give logical sanction to the thirst for absolute service never boldly avowed in the past. Some by one gate, and some by another, we have all entered into a great heritage and we know it. . . .''

Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, a celebrated Indian publicist, speaking of the impression which Swami Vivekananda left in England, wrote from London to *The Indian Mirror* of February 15, 1898:

''Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu Scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he has succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from 'The Dead Pulpit' by Mr. Haweis, you have clearly understood that, owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

''Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way. . . . She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you?' . . . . She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you were coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, 'Look, there is the Swami Vivekananda.' As I had to catch the train in a hurry I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and was compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda, even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at this agreeable incident, and thanked my *Gerua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides this incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen who have come to revere India and who listen eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India."

During his stay in England, both before and after his visit to the Continent, the Swami himself was pleased with the results of his English labours. To one of his closest American friends he wrote (almost in a mood of prophecy concerning the future character and success of his mission) that he believed in the power of the English to assimilate great ideas; that though the process of assimilation might be slow, it would be all the more sure and abiding. He often spoke of the hold the Vedânta would eventually have in England and believed that the time would come when distinguished ecclesiastics of the Church of England, imbued with the truth and the idealism of the Vedânta, would form a liberal community within the Anglican Church itself, supporting the universality of religion, both in vision and in practice.

Referring to his work in England, in his famous "Reply to the Address of Welcome in Calcutta," the Swami says:

"My work in England has been more satisfactory to me than my work in America. The bold, brave and steady Englishman, . . . if he has once an idea put into his brain, it never comes out, and the immense practicality and energy of the race makes it sprout up and immediately bear fruit. It is not so in any other country. That immense practicality, that immense vitality of the race you do not see anywhere else. There is less of imagination, but more of work, and who knows the well-spring, the mainspring of the English heart? How much imagination and feeling is there! They are a nation of heroes; they are the true Kshatriyas; their education is to hide their feelings and never to show them. From their childhood they have been educated up to that. . . . But with all this heroic superstructure, behind this covering of the fighter, there is a deep spring of feeling in the English heart. If you once know how to reach it, if you get there, if you have personal contact and mix with him, he will open his heart, he is your friend for ever, he is your servant. Therefore in my opinion, my work in England has been more satisfactory than anywhere else. . . ."

Before his departure for India, he wrote to a group of women disciples in America:

"The work in London has been a roaring success. The English are not so bright as the Americans, but once you touch their heart, it is yours for ever. Slowly have I won success, and is it not remarkable that by six months' work altogether I should have a steady class of about one hundred and twenty persons apart from public lectures? Here everyone means work —the practical Englishman. Captain and Mrs. Sevier and Mr. Goodwin are going to India with me to work and spend their own money on it! There are scores here ready to do the same: men and women of position, ready to give up everything for the idea once they feel convinced! And last, though not least, the help in the shape of money to start my 'work' in India has come and more will follow. My ideas about the English have been revolutionised. I now understand why the Lord has blessed them above all other races. They are steady, sincere to the backbone, with great depths of feeling,—only with a crust of stoicism on the surface,—if that is broken you have your man."

Certainly there never acted a greater force to produce a sympathetic relation and co-operation between the Eastern and Western worlds than that wielded by the Swami and his Gurubhais and his disciples.

On December 16, the Swami and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier left London for the Continent, Mr. Goodwin sailing from Southampton to meet them at Naples. Several intimate friends were at the London station to see them off. Mr. E. T. Sturdy voiced the feelings of many of his fellow-disciples when he penned the following lines in a private letter to one of them in America:

"Swami Vivekananda left today . . . . He had a magnificent reception in the Galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in

Water-Colours. There were about five hundred people there, and a good many friends were away from London. His influence has sunk very deep into many hearts. We are going straight ahead with his work. His brother-Swami, a nice, attractive, ascetic-minded young man will help me in this. . . .

"Your presumption is correct. I am heavy-hearted today at the loss of the noblest friend and the purest teacher I have met in this incarnation. I must have stored some exceptional merit in the past to receive such a blessing now. What I longed for all my life I have found in the Swami."

Before closing the narrative of the Swami's life in England, an incident which shows his courage in the face of danger, must be mentioned. Once as he was walking with Miss Muller and an English friend across some fields, a mad bull came tearing towards them. In the words of Sister Nivedita:

"The Englishman frankly ran, and reached the other side of the hill in safety. The woman ran as far as she could, and then sank to the ground, incapable of further effort. Seeing this, and unable to aid her, the Swami,—thinking 'So *this* is the end, after all'—took up his stand in front of her, with folded arms. He told afterwards how his mind was occupied with a mathematical calculation, as to how far the bull would be able to throw. But the animal suddenly stopped, a few paces off, and then, raising his head, retreated sullenly.

"A like courage—though he himself was far from thinking of these incidents—had shown itself, in his early youth, when he quietly stepped up to a runaway horse, and caught it, in the streets of Calcutta, thus saving the life of the woman, who occupied the carriage behind."

XXVII

TOWARDS INDIA

Now London was left behind. It was as if a great burden had suddenly dropped from the Swami's shoulders. He knew that the work would go on well under Swami Abhedananda. He had faith in the Lord and he knew that he was but an instrument in the hands of the Most High.

The Swami rejoiced that he was free again. He said to Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, "Now I have but one thought, and that is India. I am looking forward to India—to India!" On the eve of his departure an English friend asked, "Swami, how do you like your motherland now after four years' experience of the luxurious, glorious, powerful West?" His significant reply was, "India I loved before I came away. Now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha!"

The party travelled directly to Milan, *via* Dover, Calais and Mont Cenis. The Swami who was in his happiest mood, made the long hours pass rapidly, and the journey, a delight. His mind was full of plans for his country, and of thoughts of the crowded hours of public life he would probably have on reaching there. Railroad travelling generally fatigued him, but on this occasion he seemed to enjoy it. He was like a boy, pleased with everything, and keenly observant of everything on the way. His companions entered heartily into his enthusiastic moods and plans of work, for they too were eagerly anticipating their Indian experience. They entertained high hopes of what they should do in India in helping the Swami to establish the proposed Himalayan Ashrama.

Through France, across the Alps, the train travelled on and at last they reached Milan. The Swami and his companions took up their quarters at a hotel close to the cathedral in order to visit frequently this celebrated edifice. The Swami was much impressed with Leonardo da Vinci's, "The Last Supper." Altogether the Swami enjoyed Milan; this was his first experience in Italy. Leaving Milan, the party next visited the city of Pisa, famous for its Leaning Tower, its cathedral, the Campo Santo and its baptistry. Both in Milan and in Pisa the Swami admired the rich marble work, which in Pisa, in particular, is both of black and white. From Pisa they came to Florence. Its situation on the Arno, surrounded by picturesque hills makes of Florence a beautiful city, apart from the many objects and places of historic interest. The art galleries were visited, drives were taken in the parks, the history of Savonarola was narrated, and the three travellers entered into the spirit of this city.

In Florence the Swami had a pleasant experience As he was driving in the Park he met Mr. and Mrs. Hale of Chicago, whom the reader will recall as the Swami's intimate friends and hosts in America, whose residence he had made his home for some time. They were touring in Italy and knew nothing of his presence in the city. Thus it was for the three a most agreeable surprise. The Swami spent some hours in lively reminiscences and discussed with them the plans of his life and work in India.,

As the train left Florence for Rome the Swami was full of emotion, for of all cities in Europe he was most desirous to see Rome. One week was spent in this imperial city. Each day new places of interest were visited. Prior to leaving London, Mrs. Sevier, through the kindness of Miss MacLeod, was given the address of a Miss Edwards, well known in English circles in Rome. With her was staying Miss Alberta Sturgis, a niece of Miss MacLeod. Both these ladies became warm admirers of the Swami and his teaching, and joined him and Mr. and Mrs. Sevier in several of their excursions in and about Rome. Miss Edwards was especially taken with the idealism of his philosophy and with his immense knowledge of Roman history and general human culture.

Everything that he saw in Rome immensely interested him. At St. Peter's beneath its vast dome, before the shrines of the Apostles, he entered, in the silence of meditation, into that apostolic world in which the Apostle Paul preached and St. Peter inspired the followers of the Christ. He was impressed with the Christian liturgy, seeing therein a kinship with the religious ceremonials of his own land. One of his lady companions asked, "Well, Swami, do you like these ceremonies?" He said, "If you love a Personal God, then give Him all your best,—incense, flower, fruits and silk. There is nothing good enough to be offered to God." But on Christmas Day when he attended the imposing ceremony of High Mass at St. Peter's with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier he became restless after a time and whispered to them, "Why all this pageantry and ostentatious show? Can it be possible that the Church that practises such display, pomp and gorgeous ceremonial is really the follower of the lowly Jesus who had not where to lay his head?" He could not help drawing a contrast between these splendours of the outward religious form at St. Peter's and the great spirit of Sannyâs which the Christ taught!

In order to divert the Swami's mind Mr. and

Mrs. Sevier arranged for many pleasant drives on those beautiful old Roman highways away from even history and ruins. The climate and the spirit of the Eternal City are at their best in the winter season, especially at Christmas time. The Christ-spirit filled the air, and the Swami was caught up into it; many times he spoke touchingly of the Christ-Child, contrasting the stories of His birth with that of the beautiful Indian Christ-Child, Sri Krishna.

The Swami made the round of all the places of interest in Rome, the palaces of the Cæsars, the Forum, the Palatine Hill, the Temple Vesta, the public baths of the ancient Romans, the colosseum, the Capitoline Hill, and the Church of S. Maria di Ara Coeli, St. Peter's, and the Vatican, amongst other places of interest, of beauty and historic importance. At the Forum, once adorned with most imposing buildings and which is now covered with numerous relics of its former majesty. . . . . Swamiji closely examined Trajan's Pillar, the most beautiful column in Rome. It is 117 ft. in height and the bas-reliefs with which it is ornamented, represent the exploits of Trajan, and contain over 2,000 human figures. The triumphal Arch of Titus, which was erected, 81 A.D., to commemorate the conquest of Jerusalem, is in a good state of preservation. Swamiji was very quiet at first, but the more one watched him, the more convinced one became of the interest that lay behind the outward calm. He was thinking of the Rome of long ago that had mighty aspirations and embodied them in architectural forms marvellous for their size and beauty. As he went from place to place, he began to voice his observations, mingling with them such a wealth of knowledge of history and architecture that a glamour was thrown around the ancient monuments. He traced the fortunes of the Imperial idea under the

Roman Empire in the heyday of its power, when the world seemed to lie at its feet, conquered; its rise and fall after the death of Augustus, when the people and their rulers were alike corrupt.

Being Christmas Eve the streets outside the church of S. Maria di Ara Coeli had the appearance of a fair, with their lines of stalls, filled with sweets and toys, fruits and cakes, and cheap pictures of the Bambino. The Swami was amused and said, it reminded him of a *melâ* (a religious fair) in India.

When the party left Rome, however, the Swami was not sad, for he realised that each day was bringing him nearer to the desired event,—the departure for India. The next move was to Naples, where they were to embark. There were several days before the date of sailing giving the party an opportunity to see Naples and its famous environments. A day was spent in seeing Vesuvius, the party ascending to the crater by the funicular railway. While they were there, a mass of stones were thrown up into the air from the crater. Another day was devoted to visiting Pompeii, and the Swami was charmed with all he saw there. He was especially interested in a recently excavated house containing frescoes, fountains and statues, exactly as they were found. The Museum and the Aquarium also attracted the attention of the party. But what most concerned them was the approach of the date for sailing. The ship arrived at last from Southampton, bringing Mr. Goodwin as one of its passengers.

The steamer left Naples on December 30, 1896, and was to reach Colombo on January 15, 1897. They were to be many days on the ocean, but the voyage was not tedious. The Swami was throughout in excellent spirits and greatly benefited by the rest. In the Mediterranean, about midway between

Naples and Port Said, the Swami had a phenomenal dream which made a profound impression upon his mind. One night, shortly after he had retired, he had a dream in which a bearded old man, venerable and Rishi-like in appearance, appeared before him and said, "Observe well this place that I show to you. You are now in the island of Crete. This is the land in which Christianity began." The Swami then heard him say, "I am one of the Therapeutæ who used to live here." And he added still another word which escaped the Swami's memory, but which might be "Essene," the name of a sect of which Jesus the Christ is said to have been a member. They were monastic in tendency, with a liberal religious outlook and a philosophy embracing the highest unity. The word "*Therapeutæ*" unmistakably means *"Sons or disciples of the Theras,"* from Thera, an elder among the Buddhist monks, and Putra, in Sanskrit, means a *son*. The old man concluded, "The truths and ideals preached by us have been given out by the Christians as having been taught by Jesus; but for the matter of that, there was no such personality of the name of Jesus ever born. Various evidences testifying to this fact will be brought to light by excavating here." The Swami woke and at once rushed to the deck to ascertain their whereabouts just then. He met a ship's officer, turning in from his watch. "What is the time," he asked him. "Midnight," he was told. "And where are we?" "Just fifty miles off Crete!"

The Swami was startled at this singular coincidence, and it set him thinking about the historicity of Jesus the Christ, about which he had never entertained any doubts. Now he saw that the Acts of the Apostles might be an older record than the Gospels themselves, and that the views of the Therapeutæ and the sect of Nazarene might have commingled, thus conferring upon Christianity both a philosophy and a personality. But these speculations could not be offered as conclusive evidence in support of this idea of the origin and history of Christianity. He, however, had no doubt that in Alexandria a meeting had taken place of the Indian and Egyptian elements which contributed considerably towards the moulding of Christianity. It is said that the Swami wrote to a friend in England who was an archæologist about his dream, and asked him to find out if there was any truth in it. It was some time after the Swami's death that an item appeared in *The Statesman* of Calcutta stating that some Englishmen in the course of excavations in Crete came across records containing wonderful revelations of the origin of Christianity.

Whatever doubts the Swami may have had on the matter, the dream did not make him yield a whit in his love and adoration of the Son of Mary. There was the instance when a Western disciple requested him to give his blessing to a picture of the Sistine Madonna; he touched the feet of the Divine Child instead. There was also the instance when he turned upon another and exclaimed with fire in his eyes, "Madam, had I lived in Palestine in the days of Jesus of Nazareth I would have washed His feet, not with my tears but with my heart's blood!"

The Swami had an unpleasant experience with two of his fellow-passengers on his way to India. They were Christian Missionaries who insisted on talking with him on the contrast between Hinduism and Christianity. Their methods of argument were most offensive; when they were beaten at every point they lost their temper, became rude and virulent, and abused the Hindus and their religion. The Swami stood it as long as he could; walking close to one of the speakers he suddenly seized him quietly but firmly by the collar and said, half-humorously and half-grimly, "If you abuse my religion again I'll throw you overboard!" The frightened Missionary "shook in his boots" and said under his breath, "Let me go, sir, I'll never do it again!" From that time on he was most obsequious to the Swami on all occasions and endeavoured to remedy his misbehaviour by exceeding kindness.

Apropos of this incident, the Swami exclaimed in the course of a conversation with a disciple in Calcutta, "My dear Sinha, if anybody insulted your mother what will you do?" "I would fall upon him, sir, and teach him a good lesson!" "Well said, but, now if you had the same positive feeling for your own religion the true Mother of our country, you could never bear to see any Hindu brother converted into a Christian. Nevertheless, you see this occurring every day, yet you are quite indifferent! Where is your faith! Where is your patriotism! Everyday Christian Missionaries abuse Hinduism to your faces, and yet how many are there amongst you who will stand up in its defence, whose blood boils with righteous indignation at the fact?"

As a contrast to this, was one that occurred at Aden. While visiting the places of interest at this port, he drove to the Tanks, three miles inland. Espying a man at a distance busily engaged in smoking his Hookah, he left his English disciples and walked rapidly towards him. He was highly delighted at seeing an Indian face again. Accosting him as "brother," he entered into conversation with him. The man happened to be a Hindusthani betel-leaf seller. Swami's friends were greatly amused when they heard the Swami say boyishly to the stranger, "Brother, do give me your pipe," and to see him puffing away at it with great glee. Mr. Sevier then made merry with him by saying, "Now we see! It was this then that made you run away from us so abruptly!" The Swami had not had a Hookah smoke for years. When the man learned *who* his guest was, he fell at the Swami's feet. Speaking of this incident, the Swami's companions say, "The shopkeeper could not have resisted him, for he had such an endearing way about him when asking for anything that he was simply irresistible. We shall never forget that ingenuous look on his face when he said with childlike sweetness, 'Brother, do give me your pipe.' "

In the early morning of January 15, the coast of Ceylon could be seen in the distance. It was a beautiful sight in the roseate hues of the rising sun. Gradually, the harbour of Colombo with its majestic Cocoa Palms and its yellow-sanded beach came to view. This was India, and the Swami was beside himself with excitement. But he was totally unaware that he was going to meet representatives of all religious sects and social bodies who had come to welcome him home. One of his Gurubhâis had come to Ceylon to meet him; others were on the way, and in Madras and in Calcutta there was great excitement over his coming arrival. He was to find that he had become the "man of the hour" in India,—that this ovation was to be the first event in a grand march of triumph and national recognition from Colombo in the far south to Almora in the distant north.

XXVIII

TRIUMPHAL MARCH THROUGH CEYLON AND SOUTHERN INDIA

The home-coming of Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as a great event in the history of modern India, for a united India rose to do him honour. Looming as he did upon the national horizon as the Arch-Apostle of the Hinduism of his age, and regarded as the Prophet of a re-interpreted Hinduism, an "Aggressive Hinduism," new in statement, and new in courageous consciousness,—Swami Vivekananda was the Man of the Hour and the Harbinger of a new era. It is no wonder, therefore, that his coming was awaited eagerly by millions of his fellow-countrymen. For more than three years the Indian public had been made aware that the Swami was doing the great work of presenting and interpreting Hinduism to the Western nations, with signal success. All India looked to him as to some mighty Achârya of old, born again to revivify the fading glories of the Religion Eternal, and to carry her banner throughout the whole civilised world. New forces had been at play in India ever since his triumph at the Parliament of Religions. Through the study of the Swami's lectures and utterances, the eyes of the educated Indians were opened to the hidden beauties and treasures of their religion, and they came more and more to see how Vedântism alone could claim the supreme position of being a Universal Religion. They had learnt that the Swami possessed tremendous powers and spiritual realisations, and that as a true patriot he had made an absorbing study of India's complex problems. They were more than eager to see him and hear his message; the Nation had already accepted him as its Guru.

When the news arrived that Swami Vivekananda had left Europe for India, committees were formed in the larger cities for his reception. Two of his own Gurubhais hastened to Ceylon and Madras to greet him on his arrival. Others, personal disciples of the Swami himself, made their way from Bengal and the Northern provinces to the city of Madras, and awaited his arrival there. Immediately, the journals throughout the country commenced a series of brilliant editorials, eulogistic of his personality and work. This still further inflamed the national expectancy.

The Swami himself was in entire ignorance of these great preparations in his honour. Quietly and serenely in meditation; or in converse upon the history of nations, or in rest, he spent the time aboard the steamer Printz Regent Luitpold,—his mind occupied with a hundred plans for the re-animation and re-organisation of the Indian Dharma. He was constantly drawing comparisons and reflecting on his experiences in Western lands. While in the West, his mind had always been occupied with the study of the history of the whole world and the relation of the world to Hindusthan, and of the problems and destiny of India herself. More and more the hope of awakening a National Consciousness stirred in him, and he was writing in his letters to his Gurubhais and Indian disciples the method and the means of bringing it about, trying to inspire them with his own fire and enthusiasm. Many months back in the city of Detroit, whilst he was talking with some disciples concerning the overwhelming difficulties he had met with in presenting Hinduism to a Christian public, and telling them how he had spent the best part of his vital forces in creating, among the Western nations, a reverence for what India had given as an intellectual and spiritual inheritance to the world, suddenly his whole body shook with emotion, and he cried out: "India must listen to me! I shall shake India to her foundations! I shall send an electric thrill through her national veins! Wait! You shall see how India will receive me. It is India, my own India, that knows truly how to appreciate that which I have given so freely here, and with my life's blood, as the spirit of Vedânta. India will receive me in triumph." He spoke with a prophetic fervour, and those who heard him realised that it was not for recognition of himself that he was praying, but for that of the gospel which, he felt, must become for all future times the gospel to all the nations of the world,—India's gospel, the gospel of the Vedas and Vedânta!

Let the records of eye-witnesses in the various Indian journals tell the rest of the story of his reception:

"The fifteenth of January will be a memorable day in the annals of the Hindu Community of Colombo, being the day on which the Swami Vivekananda, a teacher of wonderful abilities and attainments, a member of the most sacred Hindu spiritual Order, the Sannyâsins of India, was welcomed by them. His visit is an epoch-making one, heralding the dawn of an unprecedented spiritual activity.

"As the day was closing and the night approached, when the auspicious and sacred hour of "Sandhyâ" noted by the Hindu Sâstras as the best suited for devotion came round as the harbinger of the coming great events of the day, the sage of noble figure, of sedate countenance with large, luminous eyes, arrived, dressed in the orange garb of a Sannyâsin, accompanied by the Swami Niranjanananda and others. . . . No words can describe the feelings of the vast masses and their expressions of love, when they saw the steam launch bearing the sage, steaming towards the jetty. . . . The din and clamour of shouts and hand-clapping drowned even the noise of the breaking waves. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepped forward, followed by his brother, and received the Swami garlanding him with a beautiful Jasmine wreath. Then came a rush. . . . No amount of physical force could hold back the great multitude. . . . At the entrance to Barnes Street, a handsome triumphal arch formed of branches, leaves, and cocoanut flowers bore a motto of welcome to the Swami. All too soon, the splendid pair of horses that awaited his landing in front of the G. O. H., carried away the Swami to the pandal in Barnes Street. Every available carriage was in use and hundreds of pedestrians wended their way to the triumphal pandal which was decorated with palms, evergreens, etc. There the Swami alighting from the carriage, walked in procession attended with due Hindu honours, the flag, the sacred umbrella, the spreading of the white cloth, etc. An Indian band played select airs. A host of persons joined the procession at Barnes Street, and then, together with the Swami, marched on to another beautiful and artistic pandal in front of the bungalow prepared for his temporary residence in Cinnamon Gardens. Both sides of the road leading from the first pandal to the second, a distance of a quarter of a mile, were lined with arches festooned with palm leaves. As soon as the Swami entered the second pandal, a beautiful artificial lotus flower unfolded its petals and out flew a bird. These charming decorations went unnoticed, for all eyes were on the Swami. In their struggle to see him, some of the decorations were destroyed. The sage and his disciples took their seats amidst a shower of flowers. After silence was restored, a musician played a charming air on his violin; then the sacred Tamil hymns the 'Thevaram,' two thousand years old, were sung; a Sanskrit hymn composed especially in the Swami's honour was also intoned. The Hon. Mr. P. Coomaraswamy stepping forward, bowed to the Swami in oriental fashion and then read an address of welcome on behalf of the Hindus.

"The Swami rose amidst deafening cheers and responded to the address in an eloquent and impressive style, peculiarly his own. The huge audience were carried away by his words, —simple and plain though they were.

"In the course of his reply he pointed out that the demonstration had not been made in honour of a great politician, or a great soldier, or a millionaire. 'The spirituality of the Hindus,' he said, 'is revealed by the princely reception which they have given to a begging Sannyâsin.' He was not a general, not a prince, not a wealthy man, yet men great in the transitory possessions of the world, and much respected had come to honour him, a poor Sannyâsin. 'This,' he said, 'is one of the highest expressions of spirituality.' He urged the necessity of making religion the backbone of the national life, if the nation was to live, and disclaimed any personal character in the welcome he had received, insisting that it was but the recognition of a principle.

"The Swami then entered the house. Here another garland was placed around his neck, and he was escorted to a seat. The people who had taken part in the formal proceedings of the meeting were standing outside and were unwilling to disperse. Finding that many were waiting to see him again, Swamiji came out and after the manner of Sannyâsins he saluted and blessed them all."

During the succeeding days, the bungalow occupied by the Swami (which was henceforth named 'Vivekananda Lodge') was thronged incessantly by visitors. It became, indeed, a place of pilgrimage, the honour and respect shown to the Swami being something of which no conception can be formed by those who are unaccustomed to the religious demonstrations of the East. Among the many visitors were men of all stations in life, from the first officials in Ceylon to the poorest of the poor. An interesting incident may here be mentioned. A poor woman, who was evidently in distress, came to see the Swami, bearing in her hand the customary offering of fruit. Her husband had left her in order that he might be undisturbed in his search for God. The woman wanted to know more about God, so that she could follow in his footsteps. The Swami advised her to read the Bhagavad Gita and pointed out to her that the best way to make religion practical for one in her station, was the proper fulfilment of household duties. Her reply was very significant. "I can read it, Swamiji," she said, "but what good will that do me if I cannot understand it and feel it?" —a striking example, first, of the truth of the saying that religion does not rest in books, and, secondly, of the amount of deep religious thought to be found even among the poor and apparently uneducated of the East.

In the evening of the 16th the Swami gave a stirring address in the Floral Hall to an audience which overflowed the building. The subject of this first public lecture in the East, after his arrival from his triumphs in the West, was, 'India, the Holy Land.'

The following day, Sunday, was again spent in receiving visitors until the evening, when the Swami paid a visit to the temple of Siva. The crowd which accompanied him was immense, and a most interesting characteristic of the evening was the repeated stopping of the carriage in order that the Swami might receive gifts of fruit, that garlands of flowers might be placed round his neck and rose-water sprinkled over him. It is a custom in Southern India and Ceylon, when an especially honoured guest pays a visit to a house, to burn lights and display fruit on the threshold, and this was done at almost every Hindu dwelling which the procession passed, particularly in Checku Street, the heart of the Tamil quarter of Colombo. At the Temple the Swami was received with shouts of 'Jaya Mahâdeva!' (Victory unto the Great God!) After worshipping the Lord and holding a short converse with the priests and others who had assembled, the Swami returned to his bungalow where he found a number of Brâhmans with whom he conversed until half past two the following morning.

On Monday, the Swami paid a visit to Mr. Chelliah, whose house was decorated for this purpose in a most artistic fashion. Hearing that he was to arrive, thousands of spectators were waiting for him and when his carriage drew nearer and nearer, the enthusiastic cheering increased more and more, and garlands after garlands and loose flowers were showered upon him. He was seated in a place especially prepared for him, and the sacred waters of the Ganges were sprinkled over him. The Swami then distributed sacred ashes which all received with sacramental joy. A picture of his own Master, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, having attracted the Swami's attention, he at once got up and with great reverence made obeisance thereto. He then partook of light refreshments and expressed his joy on seeing that the house contained pictures of saints. This interesting meeting was brought to a close by the singing of several sacred songs.

In the evening, the Swami delivered a second lecture to another large audience on the Vedânta philosophy, at the Public Hall of Colombo. The audience listened to a most powerful and lucid exposition of the Advaita philosophy. The central theme of his address was the advocacy of a universal religion, based on the Vedas. In the course of his lecture the Swami's attention was drawn to the European dress in which many Indians had appeared. He was evidently annoyed, and feeling it his duty, he cautioned them against such slavish imitation. He said that European dress did not suit Orientals. It was not this dress or that which he recommended in particular, but it was the manner in which he found his countrymen foolishly aping foreign ways that called forth his criticism.

In the morning of the 19th the Swami left Colombo for Kandy by train in a special saloon. His original intention was to take a steamer direct from Colombo to Madras, but on his arrival in Ceylon so many telegrams poured in beseeching a visit to Ceylonese and Southern Indian towns, if only in passing, that he was induced to alter his plans and make the journey overland. At the railway station at Kandy a large crowd awaited him with an Indian band and the temple insignia, to convey him in procession to a bungalow in which he was to take rest. When the cheering which greeted his arrival had subsided, an address of welcome was read.

The reply was again brief, and after a few hours' rest, during which the interesting points of the beautiful town were visited, the journey was resumed and Metale reached the same evening. On Wednesday morning the Swami began a coach-ride of two hundred miles,—through a country, the beauty of whose vegetation has placed it among the brightest spots in the world,—to Jaffna. A few miles beyond Dambool, a mishap occurred. One of the front wheels of the coach was smashed in descending a hill, necessitating a stoppage of three hours on the roadside. Fortunately, the wheel did not come entirely off, or the carriage would have been overturned. After a long wait, only one bullock-cart was secured from a distant village, and in it was put Mrs. Sevier with all the luggage. Then progress was made but slowly, as the Swami and his companions had to walk several miles before they got other bullock-carts. They passed the night in the carts and reached Anurâdhapura passing through Kanahari, and Tinpani, about eight hours late.

Under the shade of the sacred Bo-tree the Swami gave a short address, to a crowd of two to three thousand people, interpreters translating, as he proceeded, into Tamil and Singalese. The subject was 'Worship,' and he exhorted his hearers to give practical effect to the teachings of the Vedas, rather than pay attention to mere empty worship. When the Swami had proceeded so far, a huge crowd of fanatic

Buddhists, Bhikshus and householders—men, women and children—gathered round him and created such a horrid noise by beating drums, gongs, cans, etc., in order to stop the lecture, that he was obliged to conclude abruptly. It would have ended in a serious riot between the Hindus and the Buddhists, had it not been for the persuasive appeal from the Swami to the Hindus urging them to practise restraint and patience under such provocation. This led the Swami to speak of the universality of religion, and, in this stronghold of Buddhism, he urged that the God worshipped either as Siva, as Vishnu, as Buddha, or under any other name was one and the same, thus showing the necessity not only for tolerance but also for sympathy between followers of different creeds.

From Anuradhapura to Jaffna is a distance of one hundred and twenty miles, and as the roads and the horses were equally bad, the journey was troublesome, saved from tediousness only by the exceeding beauty of the surroundings. Indeed, on two successive nights, sleep was lost. On the way, however, a welcome break was the reception of the Swami with all honour at Vavoniya, and the presentation of an address.

After the Swami had replied briefly, the journey was resumed through the beautiful Ceylon jungles to Jaffna. There was a reception of an informal character early the following morning at Elephant Pass where a bridge connects Ceylon with the Island of Jaffna. Twelve miles from the town of Jaffna, the Swami was met by many of the leading Hindu citizens, and a procession of carriages accompanied him for the remainder of the distance. Every street in the town, nay, every house was decorated in his honour. The scene, in the evening, when the Swami was driven in a torch-light procession to a large pandal erected at the Hindu College, was most impressive. All along the route there was great enthusiasm, and there must have been at least ten to fifteen thousand people accompanying him.

A local newspaper drescribing the public reception given to the Swami and his visit to Jaffna, says:

"It was arranged by the Reception Committee that the Swami was to be received privately at Uppar on Sunday morning by a deputation of seven members, and that the public demonstration in the town in his honour should be reserved for the evening. But it was found that one hundred persons, the elite of the Hindu society, were collected at Uppar anxiously awaiting his arrival on Sunday morning. Till 9 A.M., the coach with the distinguished monk and party accompanying him did not make its appearance. It was then resolved to go ahead another five miles and wait at Chavakachari. No sooner had that place been reached than the Swami and his party arrived by the mail coach. A procession was then formed to drive to the town, with the Swami, his Gurubhai, Swami Niranjanananda, and Mr. Naglingam in the first carriage, —a landau drawn by a pair—and the rest following in twenty carriages. It was 11-30 A.M., when the procession reached the town by the Central Road. In spite of the short time at the disposal of the Committee, grand preparations had been made to accord the Swami a fitting reception at the Hindu College in the evening. A magnificent pandal had been put up in front of the institution and most tastefully decorated. The whole way from the town to the College,—a distance of about two miles—was festooned and illuminated, more especially that part of the route from the Grand Bazaar. Hundreds of banana palms were planted on both sides of the road and bunting and flags adorned the whole route. The scene was exceedingly picturesque, and great enthusiasm prevailed among the people. Thousands from all parts of the Island came to the city to get a glimpse of the renowned monk, and gathered all along the route to give him welcome. From 6 P.M. to 12 P.M., the Jaffna Kangesantura Road, as far as the Hindu College, was impassable for carts and carriages. The torch-light procession, which started at 8-30 P.M., attended with Indian music, was unprecedentedly imposing. It is estimated that more than fifteen thousand persons, all on foot, took part in it. The whole distance of two miles was so densely crowded that it looked like a sea of heads, yet perfect order prevailed from start to finish. At the gate of almost every house on both sides of the road throughout the entire distance, were placed Niraikudam and lamps, the inhabitants expressing in this manner the highest honours that could be offered, according to the Hindu idea, to a great Sannyâsin. The Swami alighted from the carriage and worshipped at the Sivan and Kathiresan temples where he was garlanded by the temple priests. Along the way also, many garlands were offered him by the local residents, so that when he reached the College at 10 P.M., he was most beautiful to look upon. The pandal was crammed even hours before the Swami arrived. Hundreds were outside seeking admission. People of all denominations had come, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Mohammedans. At the entrance to the pandal the Swami was received by Mr. S. Chellappa Pillai, retired Chief Justice of Travancore, who conducted him to a raised dais and garlanded him.

"An address of welcome was then read, to which the Swami replied in a most eloquent way for about an hour. In the evening of the day following at 7 P.M., he spoke at the Hindu College, on Vedântism, for one hour and forty minutes. There were present about four thousand persons composed of the elite of Jaffna society, and one and all were electrified with the Swami's stirring words. Following the lecture, Mr. Sevier at the request of the audience addressed the assembly explaining why he had accepted Hinduism and why he had come to India with the Swami."

With his address at the Hindu College at Jaffna, the Swami's journey across Ceylon came to a close. So great was the impression created even by this brief visit that urgent requests were made to him at every place to send teachers of the Order to preach the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in the Island. Further telegrams and letters of invitation from the representative bodies of the various towns in the interior poured in, praying the Swami to pay them a short visit, but he had to refuse them for want of time. Besides, he was tired. "He would have been killed with kindness," as one of his companions remarked, "if he had stayed longer in Ceylon."

At the Swami's request arrangements were made to convey him and his party immediately to his native land. The voyage of about fifty miles, with favourable weather was delightful. On Tuesday, January 26, at about 3 P.M., the steamer carrying the Swami and his European disciples arrived in Pamban Road. The Swami having been previously invited by the Raja of Ramnad to Rameswaram, was about to leave for Rameswaram when he heard that the Raja had come in person to meet him at Pamban. The Swami was transferred from the ship to the State-boat of the Raja; as soon as he entered it, the Raja and all his staff prostrated themselves before him. The meeting between the Prince and the monk was a most touching one; the Swami feelingly said that as the Raja had been one of the first to conceive the idea of his going to the West and had encouraged and helped him to do so, it was apt that he should meet the Raja first on landing on Indian soil. When the State-boat reached the shore he was given a tremendous ovation by the citizens of Pamban. Here, under a decorated pandal, an address of welcome was read and presented to him. The Raja added to this a brief personal welcome which was remarkable for its depth of feeling, and then the Swami gave a short reply pointing out that the backbone of the Indian national life was neither politics nor military power, neither commercial supremacy nor mechanical genius, but religion and religion alone, and it was this that India alone could give to the world. He concluded thanking the citizens of Pamban for their kind and cordial reception, and expressing his gratitude to the Raja of Ramnad for all that he had done for him.

The meeting over, the Swami was invited to enter the State-carriage of the Raja of Ramnad and was driven towards the Raj bungalow, the Raja himself walking with his court officials. At the command of the Raja the horses were unharnessed, and the people and the Raja himself drew the State-carriage through the town. For three days the Swami remained at Pamban to the delight of the citizens. The day following his arrival he paid a visit to the great temple of Rameswaram. This visit deeply touched the Swami as he recalled his journey thither five years ago, when as an unknown wandering Sannyâsin he had come there foot-sore and weary, thus bringing his pilgrimage throughout India to a close. How different were the circumstances under which he now visited it! When nearing the temple, the State-carriage in which the Swami was driven, was met by a procession which included elephants, camels, horses, the temple insignia, Indian music, and all the evidence of the respect that the Hindu pays to a Mahâtman. The temple jewels were displayed to the Swami and his disciples, and after they had been conducted through the building and shown its many architectural wonders—particularly the galleries supported by a thousand pillars—the Swami was requested to address the people who had assembled. And standing there on the sacred grounds of that famous temple of Siva, he delivered a stirring address on the true significance of a Tirtha, and of worship, charging the eager listeners, and through them all his co-religionists to worship Siva by seeing Him not in images alone, but in the poor, in the weak and in the diseased. Mr. Naglingam acted as Tamil interpreter. The Raja of Ramnad was beside himself with the great spirit of the occasion, and the very next day fed and clothed thousands of poor people. And in commemoration of this great occasion, the Raja erected a monument of victory, forty feet in height, bearing the following inscription:

"Satyameva Jayate.

"This monument erected by Bhâskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramnad, marks the sacred spot, where His Holiness Swami Vivekananda's blessed feet first trod on Indian soil, together with the Swami's English disciples, on His Holiness' return from the Western Hemisphere, where glorious and unprecedented success attended His Holiness' philanthropic labours to spread the religion of the Vedânta.

"January 27, 1897."

Then came the short trip from Pamban across to the mainland, and after breakfasting in one of the rest-houses provided by the charity of the Raja for the benefit of wayfarers, Tiruppullani was reached, where an informal reception was given to the Swami. It was well-nigh evening when Ramnad came in sight. The journey from the sea-coast proper was made by bullock-cart, but when nearing Ramnad, the Swami and party entered the State-boat which conveyed them across one of the large tanks that abound in Southern India. Thus the imposing reception took place on the banks of a lake, heightening the scenic effect of the great meeting. The Raja, it goes without saying, took the leading part in the ceremony of welcome, and introduced the Swami to the leading citizens of Ramnad.

The firing of cannon announced to the waiting thousands the arrival of the Swami; and at the time of landing numerous rockets shot forth into the air, and they continued to be fired at repeated intervals until the procession reached its goal. Marks of rejoicing and festivity were everywhere in evidence. The Swami was driven in the State-carriage, accompanied by the Raja's own bodyguard under the command of his brother, while the Raja himself directed the course of the procession afoot. Numerous torches flared on either side of the road, and both Indian and European music added life to the already lively proceedings, the latter playing—"See the Conquering Hero Comes," both on the landing of the Swami and on his approach to the city proper. When half the distance had been traversed, the Swami at the request of the Raja descended from the State-carriage and took his seat in the handsome State-palanquin. Attended with all this pomp, he reached the Sankara Villa.

After a short rest, he was led into the large audience hall where thousands had gathered knowing that he would speak to them in reply to their address of welcome. As he entered the hall, shouts of triumph and joy resounded, renewing the great enthusiasm which had been manifested all along the Swami's line of march by jubilant crowds. The Raja opened the meeting with a speech in which he highly eulogised the Swami, and then called upon his brother, Raja Dinakara Sethupathi, to read an address of welcome, which was then presented to the Swami enclosed in a massive casket of solid gold of the most exquisite design and workmanship.

The Swami's reply was characterised as was usual with most of his Indian lectures, by the richness and beauty of his thought and by his fiery eloquence; these in conjunction with the power of his personality roused the people to intense enthusiasm for their religion and the ideal of their national life and their duty to the Motherland.

The Raja closed the proceedings with the praiseworthy suggestion that the visit of the Swami to Ramnad should be commemorated by a public subscription to the Madras Famine Relief Fund.

During his stay at Ramnad the Swami received numerous visitors in addition to lecturing in the Christian Missionary School kindly lent for the purpose, and attending a Durbar at the palace held in his honour. On the latter occasion the great hall was brilliantly lighted, the Raja's own band playing. Here he received further addresses in Tamil and Sanskrit to which he replied, graciously referring to the large-heartedness of the Raja and to his religious temperament. He conferred on the Raja the title of 'Râjarshi,' signifying thereby that the Raja was both a ruler and a sage in one. At the earnest solicitation of the Raja the Swami then gave a short address into a phonograph on the need of Sakti-worship in India. Following on the visit to the palace on the Sunday evening, a fresh start was made at midnight for the journey northwards to Madras.

Paramakudi was the first stopping-place after leaving Ramnad, and there was a demonstration on a large scale, many thousands following him in procession. An address of welcome was given to which the Swami made a touching reply.

At Manamadura, where the next halt was made, the Swami was taken in a long procession to a huge pandal under which, amidst deafening shouts of enthusiasm, an address of welcome, both of the citizens of the neighbouring town of Sivaganga and those of Manamadura, was tendered him. He replied in a few well-chosen words.

Again the journey was resumed—it was one continuous tour of triumph—until Madura, the ancient city famous for its learning and magnificent temples and memories of old kingdoms, was reached. At this place the Swami was housed in the beautiful bungalow of the Raja of Ramnad. In the afternoon an address of welcome in a velvet casket was presented to him to which he replied with great fire and feeling.

Three weeks of continuous travelling, speaking and ovations had tired him physically, but the vigour of his mind and spirit was indefatigable. Though in some places he visited he was not fit physically, to deliver public speeches and receive visitors at all times of the day, he waived aside all consideration of his body and rose equal to the demands of the occasion. His heart was gladdened to see such tremendous religious zeal and enthusiasm among his people, which led him to hope for great things to come in the future.

While in Madura the Swami paid a visit to the Minakshi temple, where he was received with marked respect. He spoke most cordially with the temple priests and referred enthusiastically to the marvellous architecture and art the temple embodied. In the evening he entrained for Kumbakonum. All along the way, at each station at which the train stopped, crowds of people were in waiting to welcome him with immense enthusiasm. Even the smallest villages sent their quota of representatives. At every station garlands of flowers and short addresses of welcome were presented, and the people pressed in and about the train to have a glimpse of their hero; it was as though they had come to see a royal pageant. The Swami in a few words replied most suitably to their addresses of welcome and regretted that time did not permit him to accede to their request to stay for a day at every stop. At Trichinopoly, in particular, at four o'clock in the morning, there were over a thousand people on the platform, who presented him with an address. Addresses were also presented from the Council of the National High School, Trichinopoly, and also from the student population of that renowned city. The replies to these addresses were necessarily brief. At Tanjore somewhat later, another large demonstration was made.

It might be imagined, from the previous demonstrations of honour and praise which he had received from all quarters, that his reception at Kumbakonum would be equally spontaneous and imposing. So it was. The citizens knew no bounds to their great enthusiasm and rejoicings. The Swami took rest here for three days as he knew heavy work was awaiting him in Madras. Two addresses of welcome were given to him, embodying the sentiments respectively of the Hindu community at large and of the Hindu students of the town. In reply the Swami delivered one of the most stirring addresses of his whole tour, entitled "The Mission of the Vedânta."

At all the towns on his way to Madras, the Swami met with the same enthusiastic greetings. At Mayavaram the citizens gathered in huge numbers filling the whole of the station platform, and a committee headed by Mr. D. Natesa Aiyer presented him with an address. In reply the Swami thanked the assembly, saying with humility that he had only fulfilled the mission which the Lord had commissioned him to do. He was grateful, he said, that his small labours should meet with such heart-felt response from the nation. The train steamed off amidst wild shouts of "Jaya Swami Vivekananda Maharajjiki Jaya!"

A remarkable incident which speaks volumes for the love and adoration in which the Swami was held by the millions of Southern India took place at a small railway station, some few miles from the Madras city proper. Hundreds of people had assembled there to get a glimpse of the "Great Teacher" and pay their homage to him. The train was a 'through' train and was not to stop at that station. The crowds importuned the station-master to flag the train to make it stop if only for a few minutes, but to no avail. At last, seeing the train coming in the distance, hundreds of people fell flat upon the railway line, determined by this extreme course to stop the train! The station-master was panic-stricken. The guard of the incoming train realised the situation and at once ordered the train to be stopped. The people crowded round the Swami's carriage and sent forth shouts of triumph in his honour. The Swami, visibly stirred by this display of emotion, appeared for a few moments before them, extending his hands lovingly in blessing, and briefly thanked them with all his heart.

Great enthusiasm prevailed for weeks in the city of Madras and its environs over the home-coming of Swami Vivekananda. Extensive preparations were being made for the Swami's reception. The streets and thoroughfares of the great city were profusely decorated; seventeen triumphal arches were erected; blazing mottoes of welcome such as, "Long Live the Venerable Vivekananda!" "Hail, Servant of God!" "Hail, Servant of all Great Sages of the Past!" "Hearty Greetings of Awakened India!" "Greetings to the Swami Vivekananda!" "Hail, Harbinger of Peace!" "Hail, Sri Ramakrishna's Worthy Son!", "Welcome, Prince of Men!" were everywhere in evidence. Amongst Sanskrit Slokas was "Ekam Sat Viprâh Bahudhâ Vadanti!" For days previous, committees of reception and arrangement had been at work and Madras papers were filled with editorials concerning the Swami and the grand preparations that were being made for giving him a fitting reception. On the day of his arrival, representatives of leading papers like *The Hindu, The Madras Mail,* etc., met him at

Chingleput and travelled with him to Madras for interviews. The *Madras Times* wrote as follows:

"For the past few weeks, the Hindu public of Madras have been most anxiously expecting the arrival of Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu monk of world-wide fame. At the present moment his name is on everybody's lips. In the schools, in the colleges, in the High Court, on the Marina, and in the streets and bazaars of Madras, hundreds of eager persons may be seen asking everybody, 'When will the Swami Vivekananda come?' Large numbers of students from the moffussil, who have come up for the university examinations, are staying here, awaiting the Swami, and increasing their hostelry bills, despite the urgent call of their parents to return home immediately for the holidays. From the nature of the receptions received elsewhere in this Presidency, from the preparations being made here, from the triumphal arches, erected at Castle Kernan, where the 'Prophet' is to be lodged at the cost of the Hindu public, and from the interest taken in the movement by the leading Hindu gentlemen of this city, like the Hon. Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer, there is no doubt that the Swami will have a grand reception. It was Madras that first recognised the superior merits of the Swami and equipped him for his journey to Chicago. Madras will now have again the honour of welcoming the undoubtedly great man who has done so much to raise the prestige of his motherland. Four years ago when the Swami came here, he was practically an obscure individual. In an unknown bungalow at St. Thome, he spent some two months holding conversations on religious topics and teaching and instructing all comers who cared to listen to him. Even then a few educated young men with a 'keener eye' predicted that there was something in the man, 'a power' that would lift him above all others, and pre-eminently enable him to be the leader of men. These young men who were then despised as 'misguided enthusiasts,' 'dreamy revivalists,' have now the supreme satisfaction of seeing 'their Swami,' as they loved to call him, return to them with a great European and American fame. The Mission of the Swami is essentially spiritual. . . . Whatever differences of opinion followers of other creeds may have with him, . . . few will venture to deny that the Swami has done yeoman service to his country in opening the eyes of the Western world to 'the good in the Hindu.' He will always be remembered as the first Hindu Sannyâsin who dared to

> cross the sea to carry to the West the message of what he believes in as a religious peace. . . ."

From the early hours of the morning the city wore a festive air and thousands were making their way to the railway station, many of them carrying flags and flowers, symbols of their joy and triumph. When the train, conveying the distinguished monk, steamed into the Madras Station, the Swami was received with thundering shouts of applause and with an enthusiasm unprecedented in the annals of Madras. After the preliminary reception, an elaborate procession commenced, the horses of the Swami's carriage were unharnessed and the citizens of Madras took their places. Tens of thousands of people crowded the streets. From windows and verandahs people sought to gain a glimpse of the great procession which wended its way by a circuitous route to the palatial residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, known as the "Castle Kernan." All along the way the Swami, now sitting, now standing, constantly bowed in recognition of the plaudits of the crowd. The cynosure of all eyes, he appeared in the midst of that procession like a conqueror returning from the battlefield, crowned with glory—not a conqueror of earthly dominions, but a conqueror of hearts, both Eastern and Western.

A leading paper describing the Swami's entrance into Madras and the public reception accorded to him writes:

> "Due to previous information widely disseminated that Swami Vivekananda would arrive at Madras this morning by the South Indian Railway, the Hindus of Madras, of all ages and of all ranks, including young children in primary schools, grown-up students in colleges, merchants, pleaders and judges, people of all shades and varieties, and in some instances, even women, turned up to welcome the Swami on his return from his successful mission in the West. The railway station at

Egmore, being the first place of landing in Madras, had been well fitted up by the Reception Committee who had organised the splendid reception in his honour. Admission to the platform was regulated by tickets rendered necessary by the limited space in the interior of the station; the whole platform was full. In this gathering all the familiar figures in Madras public life could be seen. The train steamed in at about 7-30 A.M., and as soon as it came to a standstill in front of the south platform, the crowds cheered lustily and clapped their hands, while a native band struck up a lively air. The members of the Reception Committee received the Swami on alighting. The Swami was accompanied by his Gurubhais, the Swamis Niranjanananda and Sivananda, and by his European disciple Mr. J. J. Goodwin. On being conducted to the dais, he was met by Captain and Mrs. J. H. Sevier, who had arrived on the previous day with Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Harrison, Buddhists from Colombo and admirers of the Swami. The procession then wended its way along the platform, towards the entrance, amidst deafening cheers and clapping of hands, the band leading. At the portico, introductions were made. The Swami was garlanded as the band struck up a beautiful tune. After conversing with those present for a few minutes, he entered a carriage and pair that was in waiting, accompanied by the Hon. Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer and his Gurubhais, and drove off to Castle Kernan, the residence of Mr. Billigiri Iyengar, Attorney, where he will reside during his stay in Madras. The Egmore Station was decorated with flags, palm leaves and foliage plants, and red baize was spread on the platform. The 'Way Out' gate had a triumphal arch with the words, 'Welcome to the Swami Vivekananda.' Passing out of the compound, the crowds surged still denser and denser, and at every move, the carriage had to halt repeatedly to enable the people to make offerings to the Swami. In most instances, the offerings were in the Hindu style, the presentation of fruits and cocoanuts, something in the nature of an offering to a god in a temple. There was a perpetual shower of flowers at every point on the route and under the 'Welcome' arches which spanned the whole route of the procession from the station to the Ice-House, along the Napier Park, via Chintadripet, thence turning on the Mount Road opposite the Government House, wending thence along the Wallaja Road, the Chepauk and finally across the Pycrofts' Road to the South Beach. During the progress of the procession along the route described, the receptions accorded to the Swami at the several places of halt were no less than royal ovations. The decorations and the inscriptions on the arches were expressive of the profoundest respect and esteem and the universal rejoicing of the local Hindu Community and also of their appreciation of his services to Hinduism. The Swami halted opposite the City Stables in an open pandal and there received addresses with the usual formalities of garlanding.

"Speaking of the intense enthusiasm that characterised the reception, one must not omit to notice an humble contribution from a venerable-looking old lady, who pushed her way to the Swami's carriage through the dense crowds, in order to see him, that she might thereby be enabled, according to her belief, to wash off her sins as she regarded him as an Incarnation of Sambandha Moorthy. We make special mention of this to show with what feeling of piety and devotion His Holiness was received this morning, and indeed in Chintadripet and elsewhere, camphor offerings were made to him, and at the place where he is encamped, the ladies of the household received him with Arathi, or the ceremony of waving lights, incense and flowers as before an image of God. The procession had necessarily to be slow, very slow indeed, on account of the halts made to receive the offerings, and so the Swami did not arrive at Castle Kernan until half-past nine, his carriage being in the meanwhile dragged by the students who unharnessed the horses at the turn to the Beach and pulled it with great enthusiasm. Arrived at the Castle Kernan, Mr. Krishnamachariar, B.A., B.L., High Court Vakil, read a Sanskrit address on behalf of the Madras Vidvanmanoranjini Sabhâ. This was followed by a Canarese address. At the close of this ceremony, Mr. Justice Subramanya Iyer asked the gathering to disperse in order to let the Swami rest after the fatigue of his journey, which was done. The Swami was installed in one of the magnificent chambers in the upper storey of the Castle Kernan.

"Never since its earliest days has Madras witnessed such an enthusiastic reception accorded to anyone, European or Indian. Of all the official receptions that were ever held in Madras, none could equal the one given to Swami Vivekananda. Such an ovation has not been witnessed in Madras within the memory of the oldest man, and we dare say that the scenes of today will remain for ever in the memory of the present generation."

A programme was at once drawn by some

prominent citizens of Madras to regulate the presentation of addresses by different organisations as well as the addresses to be delivered by the Swami. It was settled that his first public appearance and address was to be in reply to the address on behalf of the people of Madras, after which there were to be four more devoted to a comprehensive and detailed exposition of his message to the world and to India and to the means and method for creating a national spiritual life in India in accordance with its altered conditions. The following subjects were chosen as topics for the Swami's lecture:

(1) My plan of campaign
(2) The Sages of India
(3) Vedânta in its relation to practical life
(4) The future of India

The Swami approved of the programme. He also consented to deliver an address to the Triplicane Literary Society on "Some aspects of my work in India." In addition, he gave two morning sittings at the Castle to meet people who desired to ask him questions.

The Swami's stay in Madras was a nine days' festival, a veritable "Navarâtri." Altogether twenty-four addresses were presented to Swami Vivekananda, in English, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telegu. He also presided at the Annual Meeting of the Chennapuri Annadâna Samâjam, an institution of a charitable nature, and gave a brief address in which he pointed out the superiority of the Hindu idea of charity to that of the legalised methods of other nations. He also paid a visit to the rooms of the Madras Social Reform Association.

But to return to a detailed account of his activities during his nine days' stay at Madras. The following account is taken from an extremely interesting article, published in the *Vedânta Kesari,* by Prof. Sundararama Iyer, M.A. He was, it may be remembered, the host of the Swami at Trivandrum when the unknown monk was there during his pilgrimages.

Shortly after his arrival in response to the demands of some of his followers in Madras, the Swami sang one of Jaydeva's songs in a marvellous voice and in a Râga (tune) different from any ever heard in that part of the country. "The impression received," writes the professor, "is one never to be effaced, and the Swami was in one of the lighter aspects of his complex nature." From the first day to the last of his visit he was besieged at all hours by visitors of all classes and of both sexes. Many women of respectable families came to the Castle Kernan as if they were visiting a temple. Their devotional feeling reached its climax when they gained admission and prostrated themselves before the Swami as if he were an Avatâr or Achârya revisiting the scene of his labours. There were crowds constantly waiting in front of the Castle at all hours of the day and even after dark. Writes Prof. Sundararama Iyer:

> "It had gone forth that he was an Avatâra of Sambandha-Swami (Siva) and the idea was taken up everywhere with absolute truthfulness by the common people. Whenever a glimpse of him was caught, as he passed to and fro in the Castle grounds or as he was getting into his coach on his way to one of the meetings, they prostrated *en masse* before him. The scene on such occasions was as impressive as it was unusual, emphasizing as it did that in the heart of the nation was a deep reverence for renunciation of the world's vanities and its unsubstantial fleeting attachments; that it still regarded it to be the sole means to the attainment of the lotus feet of the Supreme and the resulting liberation from the miseries in the material universe."

When the appointed day, the third after his arrival, came for the Swami to receive the Madras address, he left the Castle Kernan at about 4 P.M. It was a day of universal and high expectations. The scene in front of the Victoria Hall and along the roads and by-ways leading to it defied description. The Swami's carriage could scarcely pass, so dense was the crowd. As the Swami and his party alighted from the carriage, there were loud cries of 'open air meeting' from the vast throng assembled in front of the Hall. It was arranged that the address to the Swami should be presented inside the Hall. It was filled to its utmost capacity. Sir V. Bhashyam Ayyangar was already in the Chair. The Swami took his seat on the dais by his side, and Mr. M. O. Parthasarathi Ayyangar read the address. Meanwhile loud and continuous shouts of 'open air meeting' from outside interrupted the proceedings within. The Swami's heart was touched; he felt that he could not disappoint the countless young men, eager and enthusiastic, assembled out of doors. So he went forth to meet and mingle with the throng which broke into thundering applause when he appeared. But the noise was so deafening that the Swami could not make himself heard. He was compelled to speak from the top of a Madras Coach,—'in Gita fashion,' as he called it, to the mirth of all who heard him, meaning that there was some sort of distant analogy between himself speaking from a coach and imparting his counsel and inspiration to his people at the dawn of a new epoch and Sri Krishna delivering his message of Yoga to a world which had allowed it to sink into oblivion. He spoke briefly, clearly enunciating the central truths of Hinduism, how through renunciation, love and fearlessness souls were to be helped to cross the ocean of Samsâra into the joy of Truth and the realisation of the Self; how India had, through love for God or Self, expanded the limited, concentrated and intense love of a family into the love of country and humanity. He concluded by thanking all, urging them to 'keep up' their enthusiasm and to give him all the help he 'required' from them 'to do great things for India' and to carry out all his plans for the revival of the race. This was followed by his four other public lectures delivered on February 9, 11, 13 and 14, two in the Victoria Hall, one in the Pacheyappa's and the last in Harmston's circus pavilion. His ideas aroused the latent energies of the Indian nation; he reminded the Indians of their greatness and their weaknesses as well, now pointing to their glorious heritage and the still more glorious destiny they were to fulfil in the future, now admonishing them like a Guru, pointing out the evils of their mistaken course and the dangers ahead on the path to their salvation as a nation. He made them self-conscious, proud of their past and hopeful of their future and at the same time ashamed of their weakness and impotency and bade them gird up their loins.

A few interesting events happened during the Swami's stay in Madras. On February 8, a deputation came to him—all Saivites, from Tiruppattur to ask him questions about the fundamental points of the Advaita philosophy. The first question was—" How does the Unmanifested become the manifest!" The Swami replied that the question was illogical for 'how' and 'why' can be asked only of the relative and not of the Absolute and that he could answer questions only when they were put in a logical form. In the resulting deadlock the questioners felt that they had met their match. Then the Swami said, "The best way to serve and to seek God is to serve the needy, to feed the hungry, to console the stricken, to help the fallen and friendless, to attend and serve those who are ill and require service." The deputation listened to the Swami's passionate plea for service to humanity and as they took their departure, their countenances showed that their hearts had been touched and that a new light had been thrown on life and work.

On the morning of February 12, there came a young European lady of high intelligence, who put to him various questions on the subject of Vedânta. The Swami's resources of knowledge and argument were displayed in full to the delight and enlightenment of the lady and the entire audience. She expressed her gratitude to the Swami, and told him that she would be leaving for London in a few days to resume her social work among the dwellers in its slums and hoped that it would be her great privilege to meet him again. As she left the room, the Swami rose from his seat and advanced a few steps to see that way was made for her to leave the meeting, and remained standing till she bowed and retired. In the afternoon she returned with her father who was a Christian Missionary in Madras, and sought and obtained for him an interview which lasted nearly an hour. In answer to Prof. Sundararama Iyer's question as to how he found the strength for such incessant activity, the Swami said, "Spiritual work never tires one in India."

Another interesting incident occurred the same evening. A Vaishnava Pandit discussed in Sanskrit with the Swami some difficult points in the Vedânta. The Swami patiently listened to the Pandit, then turned to the audience and said in English that he did not care to waste his time in fruitless wranglings on doctrinal details of no practical value. The Pandit then asked the Swami to tell him in precise language whether he was an Advaitin or Dvaitin. The Swami replied in English, "Tell the Pandit that so long as

I have this body I am a Dualist, but not afterwards. This incarnation of mine is to help to put an end to useless and mischievous quarrels and puzzles which only distract the mind, and make men weary of life and even turn them into sceptics and atheists." The Pandit then said in Tamil, "The Swami's statement is really an avowal that he is an Advaitin." The Swami rejoined, "Let it be so," and the matter was dropped.

Meanwhile he was receiving letters from his Western disciples and from the Vedânta Societies in America and England, informing him of the progress of the work and congratulating him on his successful propaganda there. Among other valuable papers which he received was the following address, the signatories to which include some of the most distinguished minds in the history of American thought:

"TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA,—INDIA

"Dear Friend and Brother,

"As members of the Cambridge Conferences devoted to comparative study in Ethics, Philosophy and Religion, it gives us great pleasure to recognise the value of your able expositions of the Philosophy and Religion of Vedânta in America and the interest created thereby among thinking people. We believe such expositions as have been given by yourself and your co-labourer, the Swami Saradananda, have more than mere speculative interest and utility,—that they are of great ethical value in cementing the ties of friendship and brotherhood between distant peoples, and in helping us to realise that solidarity of human relationships and interests which has been affirmed by all the great religions of the world.

"We earnestly hope that your work in India may be blessed in further promoting this noble end, and that you may return to us again with assurances of fraternal regard from our distant brothers of the great Aryan Family, and the ripe wisdom that comes from reflection and added experience and further contact with the life and thought of your people.

"In view of the large opportunity for effective work presented in these Conferences, we should be glad to know something of your own plans for the coming year, and whether we may anticipate your presence with us again as a teacher. It is our hope that you will be able to return to us, in which event we can assure you the cordial greetings of old friends and the certainty of continued and increasing interest in your work.

"We remain,
"Cordially and Fraternally yours,
Lewis G. Janes, D.D. *Director,*
C. C. Everett, D.D.,
William James,
John H. Wright,
Josiah Royce,
J. E. Lough,
A. O. Lovejoy,
Rachel Kent Taylor,
Sara C. Bull,
John P. Fox."

Dr. Janes, as the reader knows, was the President of the Brooklyn Ethical Association; Professor C. C. Everett was the Dean of the Harvard Divinity School; Professor William James of the Harvard University was one of the leading psychologists and philosophers in the Western Hemisphere; Professor Wright was the Harvard Professor of Greek, who, it will be remembered, aided the Swami to secure credentials for the Parliament of Religions; Professor Royce was the Harvard Professor of Philosophy and an extremely able metaphysician, who admittedly owed much to Swami Vivekananda; Mrs. Bull was the promoter of the Cambridge Conferences and one of the foremost women in America and Norway; Mr. Fox was the acting honorary secretary of the Cambridge Conferences. Still another letter from the Brooklyn Ethical Association, equally eulogistic and much to the same effect, was received by the Swami at this time, addressed, "To our Indian Brethren of the Great

Aryan Family," and bearing the signatures of E. Sidney Sampson, President, and Lewis G. Janes, Ex-President, of the Association. Copies of this address were printed and widely circulated in Madras to an eager and grateful public.

Still another address of greeting was sent to Swami Vivekananda, signed by forty-two of his especial friends at Detroit; it reads:

> "From this far-away city, in a land, old yet young, ruled by a people who are a part of the ancient Aryan race, the mother of nations, we send to you in your native country—India, the conservator of the wisdom of the ages—our warmest love and sincerest appreciation of the message you brought to us. We, Western Aryans, have been so long separated from our Eastern brothers that we had almost forgotten our identity of origin, until you came and with beautiful presence and matchless eloquence rekindled within our hearts the knowledge that we of America and you of India are one.
>
> "May God be with you! May blessings attend you! May All-Love and All-Wisdom guide you!
>
> " 'Om Tat Sat Om!' "

Among other papers received by the Swami, mention may be made of one, the reading of which delighted him, not so much for its touching tribute to himself, but for the fact that his Gurubhai had been warmly received by his friends and disciples in New York and had made a promising beginning. On the occasion of presenting an address of welcome to Swami Saradananda at the New Century Hall, 509 Fifth Avenue, New York, on January 16, by the students of the Vedânta Society of the City, Dr. E. G. Day was reported to have spoken as follows:

> "Among the audience I recognise the faces of many who gathered to hear the sublime teachings of the Vedânta from the lips of the gifted and well-beloved Master, Vivekananda, and of many who mourned when their friend and teacher left, and who earnestly long for his return. I wish to assure you that his mantle has fallen on worthy shoulders in the person

of the Swami Saradananda who will now teach the Vedânta studies among us. I am sure that I voice your sentiments when I say that we are ready to extend to him the love and loyalty we had for his predecessor. Let us extend to the new Swami a hearty welcome."

On Monday, February 15, the Swami left for Calcutta by steamer. To the request that he should remain in Madras and open a centre there he pointed out that it was impossible for him to do so just then but he promised to send one of his Gurubhais as his representative. Several of his admirers, followers and personal friends went to the wharf to see him off. Mr. Tilak had invited the Swami to Poona, and he first thought of going there. But he was in need of rest and pined for the quiet of the Himalayas. At the beach, several merchants of the Arya-Vaisya caste (known as Komattis) met him and presented a formal address of thanks for his services to the holy motherland. The Hon. Mr. Subba Rau of Rajahmundry presented the address to the Swami on their behalf. The Swami bowed in acknowledgment and spoke kindly with them. Several boarded the steamer, and remained with the Swami until the boat sailed. Professor Sundararama Iyer begged of the Swami the favour of a moment's interview apart to ask, "Swami, tell me if, indeed, you have done lasting good by your mission to such materialistic people as the Americans and others in the West." He replied, "Not much. I hope that here and there I have sown a seed which in time may grow and benefit some at least." The second query was,—"Shall we see you again, and will you continue your Mission work in South India?" He replied, "Have no doubt about that. I shall take some rest in the Himalayan region, and then burst on the country everywhere like an avalanche."

XXIX

BACK TO BENGAL

The whole of the Bengal Presidency was alive with enthusiasm over the news that Swami Vivekananda had landed in India. Calcutta in particular was following with intense interest the movements and utterances of the Swami's triumphal progress from Colombo to Madras. A Reception Committee was formed, with the Maharaja Bahadur of Darbhanga as President, to receive him officially and to arrange for a public reception.

The Swami was looking forward eagerly to his return to the city of his birth. The boat trip from Madras was a boon to his tired nerves, for the continuous ovations, public speaking, and talking to visitors, had worn him out. It was to escape all this that he decided to travel by boat instead of by train. Before leaving Madras some of his admirers ordered a huge number of cocoanuts to be brought on board, the milk of which the Swami was to drink by the doctor's orders. Mrs. Sevier on seeing the quantity of cocoanuts asked, "Swami, is this a freight boat, that they are loading so many cocoanuts aboard?" He, very much amused, replied, "Why, no, not at all! They are my cocoanuts! A doctor has advised me to drink cocoanut-milk instead of water." He shared the fruit with the Captain and his fellow-passengers. When the steamer sailed up the Hooghly, the Swami pointed out to his disciples all the places of interest that he knew so well, as well as the places associated with his early youth and manhood.

The Reception Committee at Calcutta had been busy ever since the Swami had left Madras, and when the steamer docked at Kidderpore, there was a special train waiting to take him the following morning to the Sealdah Station. At about half past seven o'clock in the morning the Swami and his party boarded the train. Thousands of people were gathered at the Sealdah Station, Calcutta, from early morning to greet him. They were reading as they waited, copies of the two farewell addresses of his students in New York and London which were being distributed. When the whistle of the train was heard, a shout of joy rang out. When the train stopped, the Swami stood up and bowed to the multitude with joined palms. When he stepped from the carriage, those nearest him made a rush to take the dust of his feet; those further off shouted his name and that of his Master triumphantly. So dense were the crowds that it was with exceeding difficulty that the Reception Committee headed by Mr. Norendra Nath Sen, the editor of *The Indian Mirror,* could make way for the Swami to the carriage that was in waiting for him. Many Sannyâsins, in their Gerua robes, were in the crowd, some of them being his own Gurubhais. The Swami was literally loaded with garlands of sweet flowers and was visibly moved by the tremendous demonstration.

Hardly had the Swami with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier seated himself in the landau, when the horses were unharnessed and a band of Bengalee boys, mostly students, rushed forward to draw the carriage. A procession was then formed, headed by a band playing lively music, which moved in the direction of the Ripon College, its first stopping-place. A Sankirtana party followed at some distance in the rear singing religious songs with visible emotion, which lent added interest to the great occasion. Along the line of march the streets were decorated with flags and banners, flowers and evergreens. In Circular Road a triumphal arch of welcome was erected, bearing the inscription: "Hail, Swamiji!" In Harrison Road there was another with the salutation, "Jaya Ramakrishna!" And another still was constructed in front of the Ripon College bearing the word, "Welcome!" At the College itself there was a wild demonstration. Thousands had flocked thither to get a close view of the great Sannyâsin. Still thousands more pressed towards the College in the line of the procession, until a panic seemed imminent.

At the College an informal reception was held, the Swami replying briefly, as the Reception Committee had decided to postpone the public reception until a week later, so as to afford the citizens of Calcutta a more favourable opportunity of hearing him. After a short time, therefore, the Swami and his party left for Baghbazar, where they had been invited to a banquet by Rai Pashupati Nath Bose at his palatial residence. At four o'clock in the afternoon, the Swami and his European disciples were driven to the beautiful river-side residence of Gopal Lal Seal, in Cossipore, known as Seal's Garden, which was offered to the Swami and his friends for their temporary residence.

Continually, day after day, and every hour of the day, hundreds of people came to pay their personal respects to the Swami and to hear his exposition of Vedânta. Telegrams of congratulation and of welcome, and also invitations from various towns came pouring in. In the day-time he made his headquarters generally at the Cossipore mansion; at night he stayed at the Math which was then at Alambazar. The Swami had no rest. The task of receiving and entertaining countless visitors, and the constant discussion on strenuous intellectual subjects, which such visits entailed, were a great strain.

February 28, 1897, was the day, and the place chosen was the palatial residence of Raja Sir Radhakanta Deb Bahadur at Sobhabazar for the presentation of the City's address of welcome. When the Swami arrived, he was cordially welcomed by the most distinguished audience that had ever assembled in that historic capital of the British Empire in India. At least five thousand people had gathered in the inner quadrangle and verandahs all around, and the cheering which was evoked by his appearance was deafening. The meeting was presided over by Raja Binoy Krishna Deb Bahadur, who introduced the Swami as the foremost national figure in the life of India. There were present Rajas and Maharajas, Sannyâsins, a group of distinguished Europeans, many well-known Pandits, illustrious citizens, and hundreds of college students. The address of welcome was presented in a silver casket to the Swami, who replied in a speech that has become famous as a masterpiece of oratory, and of fervent patriotism. This brought him recognition, in an especial sense, as the Prophet of Modern India. He had defined in a new form the whole scope of Indian Consciousness and had given birth to entirely new ideas of national and public life. In this address one finds his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, proclaimed by him as God Incarnate, and held by him before the nation as a great spiritual ideal manifested for the good of all races and of all religions. The spirit of this lecture and of the Swami himself, made the profoundest impression, which has widened and deepened with the years, producing a New Order in modern India.

Shortly after the Swami's arrival in Calcutta the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna came off. It was celebrated, as was usual at the time, at Dakshineswar, but the fact that Swami Vivekananda himself was to take part in the festival, drew large crowds to the temple of the Mother.

Accompanied by some of his Gurubhais, the Swami arrived at the temple-garden at about nine o'clock in the morning. He was barefooted, dressed in a long Alkhalla and wore a Gerua turban. The great multitude catching sight of him cried out the name of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda repeatedly. Vast crowds eager to see him and to take the dust of his feet thronged about him and followed him wherever he went. After a while he repaired to the temple of the Mother, followed by great numbers; there before the image he prostrated himself bowing his head to the ground in adoration, in company with the swarming crowd. The Swami next visited the shrine of Sri Radhakantaji, and then entered Sri Ramakrishna's room, which was full of devotees. Scores of Sankirtana parties were everywhere singing and dancing in the name of the Lord. Triumphant shouts of "Jaya Ramakrishna" echoed and re-echoed from one corner of the vast temple-garden to the other. As though on a pilgrimage, the Swami visited with great reverence the various places of religious interest; accompanied by his European disciples, who had come just then, he walked to the memorable Panchavati Tree, the meditation-seat and place of Illumination of the Paramahamsa Deva, where he read a hymn to Sri Ramakrishna in Sanskrit, which was given to him by the composer.

Around the Panchavati, there were scores of devotees of the Great Master, but among them all, the Swami singled out Girish Chandra Ghosh. The two exchanged greetings, and the Swami comparing the present occasion with the former days when only a few attracted by the unique life of the Divine Master celebrated the birthday festival, said, "Well, what a difference between those days and these!" "I know that, but still there arises the desire to see more," replied the great dramatist, quoting from one of the Epics, where the Bhaktas longed to live on, even though miserable and afflicted, so that they might see more and more of the glories of the Lilâ or Divine Career of the Lord Incarnate. The Swami then turned his steps in the direction of the Vilva tree, another scene of the austerities of Sri Ramakrishna.

The great masses that had congregated at the Dakshineswar temple-garden called upon him repeatedly to tell them of his Master. He made an effort to speak, but his voice was drowned in the tumult. Seeing that it was impossible to make himself heard, he gave up the attempt and mingled with the crowd for some time, exchanging friendly greetings and occasionally introducing his English disciples to distinguished Bhaktas of his Master. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, when the crowd had thinned, he returned to the Alambazar Math, in company with a Gurubhai and a disciple. On the way he talked to the latter of the necessity of religious festivals and other demonstrations of religious zeal and emotion for the general masses who cannot comprehend abstract ideas of Truth.

A few days after his reply to the address of welcome by the Calcutta public the Swami again lectured before it on "The Vedânta in All Its Phases." This address was another of those masterpieces of philosophical dissertation which mark his progress from Colombo to Almora. Taking his stand upon the unassailable ground that the Vedas and the Upanishads are the basis of all systems of philosophy or religion in India, he touched upon the Sânkhya, Yoga and Râmânuja systems, showing them as classifications of the Vedânta, and maintained that before Hindus were to be known even as Hindus they must first of all be "Vedântins." He pointed out that the Vedânta is the climax of systems of philosophy and religion, and stressed the necessity of renunciation. And in this lecture, as in others, he put before his hearers the glory of the Sanâtana Dharma and the greatness of the Upanishads and Vedânta. With them as foundations he felt that Hinduism could be restored to a vigorous life. He denounced hypocrisy and fanaticism; he contrasted the degenerating influence of the Vâmâchâra practices of the Tantras with the strengthening and ennobling power of the Upanishadic teachings. The Vedânta, he felt, should be the background of everything in India. This spirit permeated his entire discourse.

This address created a profound impression in the metropolis. The citizens came to understand now more fully that the Swami stood for the true spirit and the essentials of the Vedic Dharma. The beautiful eclecticism of the Vedânta as presented by the Swami appealed most to all.

During the Swami's stay in Calcutta, though he made his headquarters at the Seal's mansion and the Alambazar Math, yet he was constantly visiting one devotee of Sri Ramakrishna or another. He was entertained frequently by one or other of the princes of the metropolis, but he was also the guest of the most humble.

Many distinguished people, persons of various professions and callings as well as hundreds of enthusiastic youths and college students used to come daily to the Seal's Garden. Among the former some came to him out of curiosity, some thirsting for knowledge, and others to test his learning and powers. The questioners were invariably charmed with his knowledge and interpretation of the Sâstras, and even great masters of philosophy and university professors were amazed at his genius.

But his heart was with the educated, unmarried youths with whom he was never tired of speaking. He was consumed with the desire for infusing his own spirit into them, and to train some of the more energetic and religious among them, so that they might devote their lives to the salvation of their own souls and to the good of the world. He did not speak to them always on spiritual topics, nor was he too generous with his praise. He deplored their physical weakness, denounced early marriage, admonished them for their lack of faith in themselves and in their national culture and ideals,—but all this was done with such unmistakable love and kindness, that they became his staunchest disciples and followers. A few excerpts from the Swami's general conversations and descriptions of the private meetings in the Seal's Garden and elsewhere, as recorded by them, will be interesting and instructive to the readers, as showing the depth and the breadth of his vision and his teachings.

Some followers of the Krishna cult in Bengal, led by the erroneous impression that the Swami in his zeal for Vedântism did not present before the Western world that other aspect of Hinduism known as Vaishnavism, had tried during his absence in the West to make the most of this matter in order to belittle his mission in the eyes of his countrymen. But the Swami's own words gave the lie to these libels. In the course of an eloquent talk on the Vaishnava faith with one of its followers he said, "Babaji, once I gave a lecture in America on Sri Krishna. It made such an impression on a young and beautiful woman, heiress to immense wealth, that she renounced everything and retired to a solitary island, where she passed her days absorbed in meditation on Sri Krishna." Speaking of renunciation he said further,—"Slow but sure degradation creeps into those sects which do not practise and preach the spirit of renunciation."

One day the Swami was talking with a young man who lived at the Bengal Theosophical Society. The latter said, "Swamiji, I frequent various sects but cannot decide what is Truth." The Swami replied in a most affectionate way, "My boy, you need have no fear; I was also once in the same state. Tell me what people of different faiths have instructed you and how you have followed their injunctions." The youth then said that a learned preacher of the Theosophical Society had clearly convinced him of the truth and utility of image-worship, and that he had accordingly done Pujâ and Japam for a long time with great devotion, but could not find peace. Then some one had advised him to try to make the mind void in times of meditation. He had struggled hard to do so, but still the mind did not become calm and controlled. "Sir," said the young man, "still I sit in meditation, shutting the door of my room, and closing my eyes as long as I can, but I cannot find peace of mind. Can you show me the way?"

"My boy," spoke the Swami in a voice full of loving sympathy, "if you take my word, you will have first of all to open the door of your room and look around instead of closing your eyes. There are hundreds of poor and helpless people in the neighbourhood of your house,—them you have to serve to the best of your ability. One who is ill and has no one to look after him,—for him you will have to get medicine and diet and nurse him; one who has nothing to eat,—you will have to feed him; one who is ignorant,—you will have to teach him, well-educated as you are. My advice to you is, if you want peace of mind, you have to serve others in this way as best as you can."

But the questioner began to argue, "But suppose, sir, if in going to nurse a patient I myself fall ill through loss of sleep and irregular meals as well as by other irregularities—" The Swami replied rather sharply, "Why, boy, it is quite evident from your words and manners that you who are so mindful of your own bodily comforts, will never go out of your way or risk your health to nurse the sick!"

Another day, in course of a conversation, a distinguished disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, a professor of long-standing, asked him, "You talk of service, charity and doing good to the world,—those are, after all, in the domain of Mâyâ. When according to Vedânta, the goal of man is the attainment of Mukti by breaking all the bondage of Mâyâ, what is the use of preaching things which keep the mind on mundane matters?" Without a moment's hesitation the Swami replied, "Is not the idea of Mukti also in the domain of Mâyâ? Does not the Vedânta teach that the Atman is ever free? What is striving for Mukti to the Atman, then?"

With the nation at his feet, with name and fame and wealth heaped upon him, Swami Vivekananda was the same simple Sannyâsin as of old, untouched by pride and conceit. One day, the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramlal Chattopadhyaya, or Ramlal Dada as he is endearingly called by the Brotherhood, came to see him. The Swami at once got up and offered Ramlal Dada his chair. Ramlal Dada out of humility and disconcerted at taking the Swami's chair in the presence of visitors, asked the Swami to resume his seat, but unsuccessfully. After much persuasion the Swami made him sit in the chair and strolled about the room saying to himself गुरुवत् गुरुपुत्रेषु "One should treat the relations of the Guru with the same honour as one would treat the Guru himself." This incident, though a simple one, was a lesson in Guru-bhakti to those who witnessed it.

In these days the Swami's moods varied according to the different temperaments of his visitors. On one occasion some one knowing his regard for "The Imitation of Christ" and its saintly author, referred to the wonderful humility which pervaded the teachings of that classical work, and observed that spiritual progress was impossible unless one thought of oneself as the lowest of the low. The Swami exclaimed, "Why should we think ourselves as low and reproach ourselves? Where is darkness for us! We are verily the sons of Light! We live and move and have our being in the Light which lighteth the whole universe!"

Once while discoursing on the conquest of lust, the Swami mentioned a personal instance which gives a hint as to what lengths he himself had gone rather than submit to the lower nature. "In the days of my youth," he said, "once I was so much troubled with a fit of passion that I became terribly vexed with myself, and in my rage sat upon a pot of burning charcoal that was near by. It took many days to heal the wound."

An enquirer one day asked the Swami about the difference between an Incarnation and a liberated soul. Without giving a direct answer to the question, he said, "My conclusion is that liberation is the highest stage. When I used to roam about all over India in my Sâdhanâ stage, I passed days and days in solitary caves in meditation, and many a time decided to starve myself to death, because I could not attain Mukti. Now I have no desire for Mukti. I do not care for it so long as one single individual in the universe remains without attaining it!"

These words of unbounded love for all beings remind one of a similar utterance of the Lord Buddha. But it must be remembered that both these great teachers of humanity spoke thus only after they had attained to illumination. Only Prophets and Saviours of mankind can challenge Mukti in that manner. Therein is the difference between an ordinary liberated soul and an Incarnation, or one who having Mukti in the palm of his hand, as it were, refuses to be merged in the Absolute or the essence of God Himself, but lives in the world for the good of others, to raise them to the highest state.

It was at the home of Sri Priya Nath Mukherjee that he said to the editor of *The Indian Mirror* that his preaching of Vedânta in the West had convinced him that all methods of raising the motherland such as politics, were but secondary to the necessity of clinging to her scriptures and obeying the injunctions thereof. After the distinguished visitor had left, the Swami had the following conversation with a preacher of the Cow Protection Society, which brings out in bold relief his love for his fellow-beings and his patriotism.

Swamiji: "What is the aim of your Association?"

Preacher: "We save our Gomâtâs (cows regarded as Mother) from the hands of the butchers by buying them; we have established refuges where old, diseased and disabled cows are taken care of."

Swamiji: "That is an excellent idea. What is the source of your income?"

Preacher: "The work is managed by gifts given by high-minded persons like you."

Swamiji: "What funds have you?"

Preacher: "The Marwaris are the chief supporters and patrons of the Society. They have helped it with large contributions of money."

Swamiji: "A terrible famine has been raging in Central India. The Government of India have published a report computing the death-rate from starvation at 900,000. Is your Society doing anything to save these starving people from the jaws of death?"

Preacher: "We do not help in famines and the like. Our object is to save the Gomâtâs only."

Swamiji: "When lakhs and lakhs of your own countrymen and co-religionists are succumbing to this dreadful famine, do you not think it your duty to help these miserable creatures, by giving them a morsel of food?"

Preacher: "No. This famine has broken out as a result of their Karma, their sins. It is a case of 'like Karma like fruit.'"

Hearing these words the Swami's face became flushed and his eyes glared at the speaker. But suppressing his emotions he exclaimed: "Sir, I have no sympathy with such organisations which do not feel for man, which seeing before their eyes thousands of their famished brothers perishing from starvation do not care to save them by offering even a morsel of food but spend millions for the protection of birds and beasts. I do not believe any public good, worth the name, can come out of such societies. 'Men are dying through their Karma, so let them die?' Are you not ashamed to make such a cruel statement? If you make the plea of the doctrine of Karma in that way, then there is no need of any endeavour to do good to others. It may be equally applied to your work,—the cows fall into the hands of the butchers and are slaughtered by them as a result of their own Karma in this or in some past lives, and so there is no need of our doing anything for them!"

The preacher feeling thoroughly discomfited said, "Of course what you say is true, but our Sâstras say, 'The cow is our mother.'"

Amused at these words the Swami said, "Yes, that cow is our mother, I can very well understand. Otherwise who else will give birth to such talented sons."

Perhaps this biting joke was lost upon this up-country preacher, for he without making any remark now asked the Swami for a contribution. He replied, "I am a Sannyâsin, as you see. If people give me money, I shall first of all spend it in the service of man. I shall try to save men first by making provision to give them food, education and religion. If after spending money on these things there be any left, I shall give something out of it to your Society."

After the preacher had left the Swami said to those about him, "What nonsense that man talked! 'What is the use of helping those who are dying due to their own Karma!' That'is the reason why the country has gone to rack and ruin. Did you see to what a monstrous extreme your doctrine of Karma is dragged! Alas, are they men who have no heart to feel for man!" As he spoke, his whole body shook with grief and disgust.

But one might go on endlessly quoting from these conversations and dialogues. They are an inspiration for Young India, surcharged as they are with unbounded love of country, fellow-men and religion.

"Strength, strength is the one word," he said in one of his Madras lectures, "that every line of the Upanishads declares unto me." To make every Indian conscious of the infinite power of the Spirit lying potential in every man, he regarded as the foremost mission of his life, for out of it came everything that made religion dynamic, life-giving, and man-making. Talking one day to a disciple he said:

> "It is rebellion against Nature, struggle for self-preservation, that differentiates Spirit from Matter. Where there is life, there is struggle, there is the manifestation of the Spirit. Read the history of all nations and you will find that that is the Law. It is only this nation which drifts with Nature and you are more dead than alive. You are in a hypnotised state. For the last thousand years or more, you are told that you are weak, you are nobodies, you are good for nothing and so on, and you have come to believe yourselves as such. This body of mine was also born and bred on Indian soil, but I have never for a moment allowed such baneful ideas to enter my mind. I had tremendous faith in myself. It is because of that, by the grace of the Lord, that those who look down upon us as weak and low, regard me as their teacher. If you have the same faith in yourselves as I had, if you can believe that in you is infinite power, unbounded wisdom, indomitable energy, if you can rouse that power in yourselves, you will be like me, you will do wonders. You will say, 'Where is that strength in us to be able to think like that, and where are the teachers to tell us not of weakness but of strength and rouse in us that faith?' It is to teach you that and to show you the way by my life that I have come to you. From me you must learn and realise that truth, and then go from town to town, from village to village, from door to door, and scatter the idea broadcast. Go and tell every Indian, 'Arise, awake and dream no more! Rouse thyself and manifest the Divinity within!' There is no want, there is no misery that you cannot remove by the consciousness of the power of the Spirit within. Believe in these words and you will be omnipotent."

At their very first meeting the Swami had spoken to this disciple in Sanskrit, and taking him apart had addressed him with that memorable Sloka of the

Vivekachudâmani of Sankarâchârya which runs thus:

> "Fear not, O wise one, there is no death for thee. There is a way of crossing this ocean of Samsâra. That very path by which the self-controlled sages have reached to the other side of its shore, I shall point out to thee."

At the Seal's Garden and at the Alambazar Math learned Pandits came to test his knowledge of the Vedânta philosophy, to meet him on his own ground and test him if they could. An incident of this character took place at the Seal's Garden. A group of Gujerati Pandits, well versed in the Vedas and the Darsanas, came to discuss the Sâstras with him. Thinking that the Swami, because of his absence in the West, had lost his fluency in Sanskrit, they spoke to him in that classic language. The Swami replied in a calm and dignified way to their excited arguments, speaking all the while the purest Sanskrit. Only once did he err, using the word "Asti" for "Svasti." The Pandits laughed aloud making much of this trifling mistake. The Swami corrected himself at once, saying, "I am the servant of the Pandits. May they allow this mistake to be overlooked!"

The subjects of the discussion were numerous and varied, but the main topic was the respective position of the Purva and the Uttara Mimâmsa. The Swami supported the Uttara Mimâmsa, and with such power of logic and language that the Pandits themselves admitted the superiority of the Jnânakânda. As they left, they remarked to a group of the Swami's admirers that though, perhaps, he had not a thorough mastery over Sanskrit grammar, he was undoubtedly a seer of the inmost spirit of the Sâstras over which he had an extraordinary command. "In discussion he is unique," they said, "and the way in which he summarises his ideas and refutes those of his opponents is wonderful. Marvellous are his intellectual gifts."

When the Pandits had gone, the Swami referring to the incivility on the part of the Pandits, remarked that in the West such conduct would not be tolerated. "Civilised society in the West," he said, "takes the spirit of an argument and never seeks to pick holes in the language of an opponent, or put to one side the subject-matter in order to make fun over a grammatical mistake. Our Pandits lose sight of the spirit in quibbling over the letter of the Dharma. They fight over the husks and blinded by argumentation do not see the kernel of the corn."

What love the Gurubhais of the Swami bore to him! While the discussion was going on, Swami Ramakrishnananda was seen sitting apart in meditation posture, counting his beads. He was praying with his whole heart to the Lord, he said later on, so that the Swami might come out victorious in the discussion.

Another interesting occurrence of this time, was a visit from two gentlemen who came with a disciple of the Swami to ask him some questions on Prânâyâma, which had been aroused in their minds by reading "Râja Yoga." The Swami at once recognised one of them as a fellow-student of his, and made them sit by him. After replying to a few questions put by some of the other visitors, he began to speak on the subject of Prânâyâma without being asked. First of all he explained through modern science the origin of matter from mind, and by drawing contrasts between the laws of matter and of mind, showed the action and reaction of thought on form, and *vice versa.* He then went on to elucidate what Prânâyâma really was. From three o'clock in the afternoon until seven in the evening, the discourse continued. From what was heard from him that day, it seemed to all that only a very little part of his knowledge of Yoga had been given out in his book, that his was not mere book-learning, but proceeded from realisation. What astounded the visitors most, however, was that the Swami should have known that they had come to him to inquire about Prânâyâma, and solved their doubts in anticipation. Subsequently when a disciple asked about it the Swami replied, "Similar incidents have happened many times in the West, and people have often asked me how I could know the questions that were agitating their minds." The talk then drifted to thought-reading and the recollections of past births, and various other "Yoga powers." One of the party asked him outright, "Well, Swamiji, do you know your own past births?" Instantly he answered, "Yes, I do." But when they pressed him to draw aside the curtain and reveal the past, so that they might see who he was in other lives, he said, "I *can* know them,—I *do* know them,—but I prefer not to say anything on the point."

One evening he was seated with the Swami Premananda in a room, conversing in an ordinary way, when suddenly he became silent. After a while he said to his Gurubhai, "Did you see anything?," to which he received a negative answer. Then he said that he had just seen a ghost, with his head severed from the body, beseeching him with an agonising look to relieve him of his misery. On inquiry it was found that in that very garden-house, many years ago, a Brâhmana who was accustomed to lend money at high rates of interest, had had his throat cut by a debtor and his body thrown in the Ganges. There were several other occasions when the Swami was visited by similar apparitions; on such occasions he would raise his heart in prayer for their deliverance and send them his benediction.

It goes without saying that the main interest of the

Swami's stay in Calcutta centred round the monastery which was then located at Alambazar near Dakshineswar. No words can describe the joy of the monks of Ramakrishna when 'their beloved Naren' was with them again. Memories of the olden days were revived. The days with the Master and the innumerable experiences of the wandering life of every one were recalled; and the Swami entertained his Gurubhais and the Bhaktas of the Lord with hundreds of tales and episodes of his life and work in 'the dim and distant West.' He freed them of many of their social inhibitions making them accept his European disciples in the Brotherhood, and gradually overcame their objections to association with the Westerners. The Swami had finally the satisfaction of seeing his Gurubhais entertaining his disciples from across the seas as their real brethren.

Of the Swami's numerous triumphs one of the greatest was the conversion of his Gurubhais from individualistic to the national idea of religious life in which public spirit and service to fellow-men occupied a prominent place. Up to this time the ideal of the monks of the Math was, to strive for personal Mukti and realisation of the Supreme Atman by severe penance and meditation, remaining as much as possible aloof from the world and its cares and sorrows, according to the prevailing Hindu idea, sanctified by tradition and sanctioned by the sages and seers from the Vedic period down to the present day.

But with the appearance of the Swami among them a new order of things was inaugurated. He railed at them—as he had done again and again in his epistles to them from the West—for their lack of faith in themselves and in the great mission of the Master, for their failure to organise themselves into an active body, and for their neglect in preaching the gospel of liberation to others. He appealed to their innate strength, calling them spiritual lions, every one capable of moving the world, if he but used his latent powers. The age demanded, he said, that they should carry the new light unto others, that they themselves should show by their example how to serve the poor, the helpless and the diseased, seeing God in them, and that they should inspire others to do the same. The mission of his life, he said, was to create a new order of Sannyâsins in India who would dedicate their lives to help and save others.

The proposition, though grand and inspiring, was to them too revolutionary and staggering. How could they suddenly change at another's bidding their precious religious ideal to which they had given their lives, for one which apparently went against their whole nature and training? With them the struggle was hard and long. But who could resist the Swami? He bore them down by the overwhelming power of his intellect and his keen insight into the significance of the teachings and the life and the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, no less than by his burning love for and passionate appeals to them. He interpreted his Master's message in a new light, showing them that their supreme duty lay in the carrying on of the Master's mission, the bringing about of a religious rejuvenation by raising the condition of the masses through service, and scattering broadcast the life-giving ideas of the Master over the entire world. The idea of personal liberation, he pointed out, was unworthy of those who believed themselves to be the favoured disciples of an Incarnation—for had not their Mukti been already assured by that very fact? They were now to arouse themselves and awaken others. That was, said the Swami, the mission entrusted to them by Sri Ramakrishna through him.

Finally, however, out of their profound faith in their Leader his brother disciples bowed their heads in acquiescence, knowing his voice to be the voice of their Master; all girded up their loins, to do anything and to go anywhere, for the good of their fellow-beings at the bidding of the Swami.

As the first fruit of this singular self-abandonment, one whose whole life and soul had been indissolubly merged, as it were, in the ceremonial worship of the Master unremittingly for twelve years, who in his unparalleled devotion to that duty, had never left the precincts of the Math even for a single day,—Swami Ramakrishnananda—went to Madras at the behest of the Swami to open a centre there to propagate the teachings of the Vedânta in Southern India. Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda had already gone to the West at the call of the Swami to help him in the work there. And full of the same spirit Swami Akhandananda went to the Murshidabad District to start famine relief work for the people dying of starvation there. It may be said here to his credit, that this impulse to be of service to his fellow-men had seized him first among all the Gurubhais of the Swami as early as 1894 when he was in Khetri. He is seen then seeking approval for his intention to open schools to educate the masses. The other Gurubhais of the Swami were also ready to take up, as occasion demanded, any work of religious and philanthropic utility launched by him or to further his ideas and plans of work in India and abroad. Thus gradually came into existence the various monastic centres, Sevâshramas or Homes of Service, and the relief centres in times of plague, famine and flood under the charge and with the co-operation of his Gurubhais and his disciples.

After his arrival in Calcutta the increased strain caused by the multifarious demands and activities in the heat of the plains was too much for the Swami. Physicians advised him to take complete rest at once; but at this time he was very busy with plans for a monastery in the Himalayas, with the removal of the Math to a permanent healthy site on the bank of the Ganges, and with the founding of a religious and philanthropic organisation to be known as the Ramakrishna Mission, which would provide training for his own disciples and instruction for the hundreds of persons that came to him. Besides, his thoughts were with his two Gurubhais who were doing excellent work in America and England; from both these countries he was receiving numerous letters asking his advice and praying for his speedy return to the West, where 'still larger opportunities' were opening up for him.

Knowing it would be best to follow the advice of the doctors, the Swami relinquished his work in Calcutta and visits to other parts of India for the time being, and went on to Darjeeling whither Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had preceded him. He was joined by Swamis Brahmananda, Trigunatita and Jnanananda, by Babu Girish Chandra Ghosh, Mr. Goodwin, Dr. Turnbull and Messrs. Alasingha Perumal, G. G. Narasimhacharya and Singaravelu Mudaliar. The three last named were his devoted Madrasi disciples of the olden days, who had come with him and his party from Madras to Calcutta and were living with him at the Math. In Darjeeling all became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Bannerjee. Through the generosity of the Maharaja of Burdwan, who revered the Swami greatly, a portion of his residence known as "Rose Bank" was placed at the Swami's disposal for some time.

The Swami now gave himself up to complete rest, walking about on the mountain paths, visiting a Buddhist monastery in the neighbourhood, rejoicing in the glorious associations of the Himalayas, conversing with his friends, or in hours of silent meditation.

While the Swami was the guest at the residence of Mr. M. N. Bannerjee, two incidents occurred which give one a glimpse of his Yoga powers. There was then living with the family, Mr. Motilal Mukherjee, who later became Swami Sachchidânanda. At this time he was suffering from high fever with delirium. The Swami out of sympathy just touched his head; the fever subsided at once, and the patient became normal. The same person was a Bhakta of the emotional type, and often in the course of Sankirtana fell into emotional states in which he would cry and groan and roll on the ground beating his hands and feet against it. The Swami touched him over the heart one day. Thenceforward the whole religious temperament of the man was changed and he became an Advaitin devoting himself to the study and practice of Jnâna Yoga! Needless to say, he was no longer subject to trances.

With the exception of a flying visit to Calcutta to receive the Raja of Khetri, who had come all the way from Rajputana to see him after his return from the West, the Swami was free from work and worry. On the occasion of the Raja's visit, the Prince was sumptuously entertained in the monastery at Alambazar, and the Swami held a long discourse with him pertaining to the mission of Hinduism. Raja Ajit Singh and several other ruling princes intended to start shortly for England. The former tried hard to induce the Swami to go with them, but the doctors would not hear of his undertaking any physical or mental labour just then.

Speaking generally, the Swami's health was very bad, though at times he felt some of his old vigour and strength. He was cautioned not to exert himself even to the extent of reading, and above all, not to indulge in any deep or serious thought. But to him to be idle was worse than death.

After a time he returned to Calcutta for two weeks in order to supervise and settle certain important matters before leaving for Almora for his health.

The Swami was far happier at the monastery where he could enjoy the freedom of the monk among his beloved Gurubhais and his devoted disciples than anywhere else. At this time several educated young men joined the Math, as a result of their listening to the inspiring words of the Swami concerning Vairâgyam. He trained them for future work by constant instruction, and holding classes at the Math on the Bhagavad-Gita and the Vedânta. Even during the years of his absence from the Brotherhood, four young men had joined the Math and were leading the life of Brahmacharya. They were anxious to be initiated into Sannyâsa by the Swami himself. For several years they had lived under the supervision of the elder members of the monastery; and the Swami, knowing that they were worthy, consented to make them his own disciples. The elder members raised serious objections with respect to one of the four because of his past life. This roused the Swami to the reply, "What is this! If we shrink from sinners, who else will save them? Besides, the very fact that one has taken refuge in the Math in his desire to lead a better life, shows that his intentions are good and we must help him. And even if one is bad and perverted, and you cannot change his character, why then, have you taken the Gerua cloth?—why have you assumed the rôle of teachers?" The Brahmachârins who were initiated into Sannyâsa, became known respectively as Swamis Virajânanda, Nirbhayânanda, Prakâshânanda and Nityânanda. Of these the first-named had joined the Math in 1891, the next two much later and the last, who was much older even than the Swami, had just done so. The initiation ceremony was very impressive and delighted the Swami more than the huge ovations in his honour.

On the day previous to the initiation ceremony, the Swami spoke of nothing but the glories of renunciation, his eyes emitting fire, as it were, and his words of power infusing strength into the aspirants. The discourse, owing to its length cannot be given here. The Swami concluded: "Remember, for the salvation of one's own soul and for the good and happiness of the many, the Sannyâsin is born in the world. To sacrifice his own life for others, to alleviate the misery of millions rending the air with their cries, to wipe away the tears from the eyes of the widow, to console the heart of the bereaved mother, to provide the ignorant and the depressed masses with the ways and means for the struggle for existence and make them stand on their own feet, to preach broadcast the teachings of the Sâstras to one and all without distinction, for their material and spiritual welfare, to rouse the sleeping lion of Brahman in the hearts of all beings by the diffusion of the light of Knowledge,—the Sannyâsin is born in the world!" And turning to his Gurubhais he exclaimed: "Remember, it is for the consummation of this purpose in life that we have taken birth and we shall lay down our lives for it. Arise, awake, and arouse and awaken others, fulfil your mission in life and you will reach the highest Goal!"

"You must renounce everything," he continued, you must not seek pleasure or comfort for yourself.

All attachment will have to be cut and cast aside. You must look upon lust and gold as poison, name and fame as the vilest filth, glory as a terrible hell, pride of birth or position as sinful as drinking wine. Being the teacher of your fellow-men and devoted to the Self within, you will have to live to attain freedom and for the good of the world. Can you strive with your whole soul to do these things? Take this path only after serious reflection. There is yet time to return to the old life. Are you ready to obey my orders implicitly? If I ask you to face a tiger or a venomous snake, if I ask you to jump into the Ganges and catch a crocodile, or if I want to sell you to work the rest of your life in a tea-garden in Assam as coolies, or if I order you to starve yourselves to death or burn yourselves in a slow fire, thinking it will be for your good, are you ready to obey me instantly?" The four Brahmachârins implied their assent by bowing their heads in silence. He then duly initiated them into Sannyâs.

Another initiation ceremony took place at the Alambazar Math about this time, when Mantras were given to Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, a lay disciple, and to a Brahmachâri (later known as Swami Suddhânanda) who had recently joined the Math after hearing the Swami speak on renunciation. To Sarat he said, "Arouse Sraddhâ in yourself and in your countrymen! Like Nachiketa go to Yama's door if necessary to know the Truth, for the salvation of your soul, for the solution of the mystery of life and death! If going into the jaws of death helps you to gain the Truth, you have to do that fearlessly. All fear is death; you have to go beyond it. Be fearless, be ready, from today, to lay down your life for your own Moksha and for the good of others. Otherwise what is the use of bearing this burden of flesh and bones? Being initiated into the fiery Mantra of absolute renunciation for the sake of the Lord, give away your body for the good of the world, as did the Sage Dadhichi when the Devas came and told him that the demon Vritra could not be killed with any other weapon but by a thunderbolt made out of his bones!"

Whenever the Swami came to Calcutta for a brief sojourn, he stayed at Balaram Babu's house in Baghbazar, where he and the monastic members of the Order always found a ready welcome and warm hospitality. On such occasions it was the scene of the gathering of Bhaktas and visitors from all parts of the city.

It was in the afternoon of May 1, 1897, that a representative gathering of all the monastic and lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna took place at Balaram Babu's house, in response to the Swami's intimation of his desire to hold a meeting for the purpose of founding an Association. He had long thought of bringing about a co-operation between the monastic and the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and of organising in a systematic way the hitherto unsystematic activities, both spiritual and philanthropic, of his Gurubhais. When all had assembled, the Swami opened the meeting by speaking in Bengali to the following effect:

> "From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organisation nothing great and permanent can be done. But in a country like India, at our present stage of development, it does not seem to me well-advised to start an organisation on a democratic basis in which every member has an equal voice, and decisions are arrived at by a majority of the votes of the community. With the West the case is different. . . . Amongst us also, when with

the spread of education we shall learn to sacrifice, to stand above our individual interests and concerns, for the good of the community or the nation at large, then it would be possible to work on a democratic basis. Taking this into consideration, we should have for our organisation at present a Dictator whose orders everyone should obey. Then, in the fulness of time, it will be guided by the opinion and consent of the members.

"This Association will bear the name of him in whose name we have become Sannyâsins, taking whom as your ideal you are leading the life of the householders in the field of activity of this Samsâra, and whose holy name and the influence of whose unique life and teachings have, within twelve years of his passing away, spread in such an unthought-of way both in the East and the West. Let this Sangha, or organisation, be therefore named the Ramakrishna Mission. We are only the servants of the Master. May you all help us in this work."

The proposal being enthusiastically supported by all the householder disciples, the future method of work was discussed and some resolutions were passed, laying down the main principles and the aims and objects by which the movement was to be guided. As originally drawn up they were to the following effect:

This Association (Sangha) shall be known as the Ramakrishna Mission.

The aim of the Sangha is to preach those truths which Sri Ramakrishna has, for the good of humanity, preached and demonstrated by practical application in his own life, and to help others to put these truths into practice in their lives for their temporal, mental and spiritual advancement.

The duty of the Mission is to conduct in the right spirit the activities of the movement inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna for the establishment of fellowship among the followers of different religions, knowing them all to be so many forms only of one undying Eternal Religion.

Its Methods of Action are:

(*a*) To train men so as to make them competent to teach such knowledge or sciences as are conducive to the material and spiritual welfare of the masses;

(*b*) to promote and encourage arts and industries; and

(*c*) to introduce and spread among the people in general Vedântic and other religious ideas in the way in which they were elucidated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Indian Work Department:

The activities of the Mission should be directed to the establishment of Maths and Ashramas in different parts of India for the training of Sannyâsins and such of the householders as may be willing to devote their lives to educate others, and to the finding of the means by which they would be enabled to educate the people, by going about from one province to another.

Its work in the *Foreign Department* should be to send trained members of the Order to countries outside India to start centres there for the preaching of Vedânta in order to bring about a closer relation and better understanding between India and foreign countries.

The aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics.

Anyone who believes in the mission of Sri Ramakrishna, or who sympathises or is willing to co-operate with the above-mentioned aims and objects of the Association, is eligible for membership.

After the resolutions were passed, office-bearers were appointed. The Swami himself became the General President and made Swami Brahmananda and Swami Yogananda, the President and the

Vice-President, respectively, of the Calcutta centre. It was decided that meetings would be held at Balaram Babu's house every Sunday afternoon, when recitations and readings from the Gita, the Upanishads and other Vedânta scriptures with comments and annotations would be given, and papers read and lectures delivered, the subjects being chosen by the President. All these were decided in the two preliminary meetings of the first and the fifth of May, and the first general meeting of the members was held on the ninth under the presidency of Swami Brahmananda. For three years the Ramakrishna Mission held its sittings at the same place; whenever the Swami was in Calcutta he was present and spoke and sang.

For some time the philanthropic and missionary work was carried on through the medium of this Association. In 1899, however, the Swami started a Math or monastery at Belur, and made over its management to a number of Trustees by a Deed of Trust in 1901, the main objects of the Math being the training of a band of monks for self-realisation and for the acquisition of a capacity to serve the world in all possible ways. Soon after this Math was established as the central seat of the monastic order, the Ramakrishna Mission Association ceased to function as an independent organisation, and the Math authorities themselves carried on the philanthropic and charitable work originally undertaken by the Mission Association.

In course of time, with the growth of its scope and public responsibilities it was felt that for the efficient carrying on of the philanthropic, charitable and missionary work, as well as for giving it a legal status it was better to have a separate organisation known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Accordingly in the year 1909 a Society under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission was registered under Act XXI of 1860. The exigencies of the Law required certain changes to be made in the rules and regulations of this Mission Association as originally drawn under the guidance of the Swami in 1897. Most of these changes, however, were of an executive nature, the principles and objects as originally laid down by the Swami remaining the same. The management of the Ramakrishna Mission was henceforth vested in a Governing Body consisting of the Trustees of the Belur Math for the time being. The registration of the Mission was undertaken to keep the Math activities, viz., the training and maintenance of a band of Sannyâsins to carry on religious work, distinct from the Mission activities.

The activities of the Belur Math extended, and in course of time various branch Maths sprang up in different parts of the country. These branch Maths and the Math at Belur were from their very inception treated as part of a single organisation. Side by side with the springing into existence of the branch Maths, the Ramakrishna Mission extended its sphere of activities, and the various philanthropic and charitable institutions that had already been started by it in different parts of India were gradually incorporated into the registered Society known as the Ramakrishna Mission, and new centres also began to be started.

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math with their respective centres are distinct institutions, there has been a close association between the two bodies as the Governing Body of the Mission is identical with the Trustees of the Math, and the principal workers of the Mission are members of the Ramakrishna Math, and both have their headquarters at Belur Math. But the Math and the Mission being independent of each other in their respective spheres of activities, own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them.

Turning now from the proceedings of the inauguration meeting of a semi-public nature, one finds the Swami in the inner circle of his Gurubhais and disciples, talking about his ideas and intentions in starting this momentous movement. A Gurubhai having protested that the Swami's ways of preaching, such as lecturing and holding meetings, and his ideas of doing works of public utility, were rather Western in type and conception and incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, the Swami was roused to an apostolic mood and delivered himself thus with great fervour:

> "How do you know that these are not in keeping with his ideas? Do you want to shut Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits? I shall break these limits and scatter his ideas broadcast all over the the world. He never enjoined me to introduce his worship and the like. The methods of spiritual practice, concentration and meditation and other high ideals of religion that he taught,—those we must realise and teach mankind. Infinite are the ideas and infinite are the paths that lead to the Goal. I was not born to create a new sect in this world, too full of sects already. Blessed are we that we have found refuge at the feet of our Master, and it is our bounden duty to give the ideas entrusted to us freely to the whole world."

The Gurubhai raising no dissentient voice to these words, the Swami continued:

> "Time and again have I received in this life marks of his grace. He himself is at my back and is making me do all these things in these ways. When I used to lie under a tree, exhausted, smitten with hunger, when I had not a strip of cloth even wherewith to tie my Kaupina, when I was determined to travel round the world penniless,—even then, through his grace I received help and succour in every way! Then again, when crowds jostled with one another in the streets of Chicago to have a sight of this Vivekananda,

I have been able, through his blessings, to digest without difficulty all that honour, a hundredth part of which would have made any man go off his head! By the will of the Lord, victory has been mine everywhere. Now I intend to do something for this country. Do you all give up doubts and misgivings and help me in my work, and you will see how, by his grace wonders will be accomplished."

The Gurubhai said:

"Whatever you wish shall be done. We are always ready to follow your leading. I clearly see that the Master is working through you. Still, I confess, doubts do sometimes arise in the mind, for, as we saw it, his method of doing things was so different, and I am led to question myself if we are not straying from the path laid down by him."

The Swami then said:

"The thing is this. Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. Even if one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot measure the unfathomable depths of our Master's mind! One gracious glance of his eyes can create a hundred thousand Vivekanandas at this instant! If he chooses now instead to work through me, making me his instrument, I can only bow to his will."

Indeed, it was the Swami among all the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, who saw in the Master not a mere person but a principle, not only the apostle of realisation and renunciation, but also of service to humanity in the spirit of worship. Did not Sri Ramakrishna fling away the bliss of Brahman to be of service to mankind? Did he not treat all beings as Nârâyanas (divinities) every moment of his life? Who among his disciples has not seen his unhappiness at the sight of poverty and misery, and his touching solicitation for their relief? Who could ever feel like him, his whole body and soul wrenched, as it were, at the distress and destitution of his fellow-men and at the sight of oppression to men and animals? True, this phase of his unique character was considerably overshadowed by the grandeur of his illuminated personality ever merging in the superconscious state and breaking forth into utterances of wonderful power and charm exhorting all to seek the Highest. It was left to his greatest disciple to interpret his Master's life and teachings from all angles. It was the genius of Swami Vivekananda to bring out and emphasise this human side of his Master's nature and to clear away the misconception which prevailed in the minds of many, that Renunciation and Service were conflicting ideas which could not be combined without detriment to the one or the other. And it was to his glory that he concretised and gave shape to those divine impulses through the institution started under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission for practising and preaching the Dharma in its universal aspect, Renunciation and Service, according to him, being the twofold National Ideal of Modern India.

Another afternoon, some time later, when the Swami was living at Balaram Babu's house, he was talking in a light mood with some of his Gurubhais, and lay disciples of the Master. At these moments he would be very gay, making all sorts of jokes, willing to take as well as give in the battle of wits. One of the Swami's Gurubhais was taking him to task for not preaching the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and challenging him to prove how his plans could be reconciled with their Master's teachings. For Sri Ramakrishna insisted, above all, on Bhakti and on the practice of Sâdhanâs for the realisation of God, while the Swami constantly urged them to go about working, preaching, and serving the poor and the diseased,—the very things which forced the mind outward, which was the greatest impediment to the life of Sâdhanâ. Then again, the Swami's ideas of starting Maths and Homes of Service for the public good, his ideas of organisation and of patriotism which were undoubtedly Western in conception, his efforts to create a new type of Sannyâsin with a broader ideal of renunciation, and others of a similar nature were incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of renunciation and would surely have been repudiated by him. The Swami took these observations of his Gurubhai at first lightly and retorted in a jocular way, saying, "What do you know? You are an ignorant man. You are a fit Chelâ of Sri Ramakrishna! Like Guru like Chelâ! Your study ended, with 'Ka,' the first letter of the alphabet, like Prahlâd, who being reminded by this letter of Krishna, could not proceed further. You are Bhaktas, or in other words, sentimental fools! What do you understand of religion? You are babies. You are only good at praying with folded hands: 'O Lord! how beautiful is Your nose, how sweet are Your eyes,' and all such nonsense,—and you think your salvation is secured, that Sri Ramakrishna will come at the final hour and take you up by the hand to the highest heaven! Study, public preaching, and doing humanitarian works are, according to you, Mâyâ, because Sri Ramakrishna did not do them himself! Because he said to someone, 'Seek and find God first; doing good to the world is a presumption!' As if God-realisation is such an easy thing to be achieved! As if He is such a fool as to make Himself a plaything in the hands of the imbecile!"

Growing more and more serious he thundered on:

> "You think you understand Sri Ramakrishna better than myself! You think Jnâna is dry knowledge to be attained by a desert path, killing out the tenderest faculties of the heart. Your Bhakti is sentimental nonsense which makes one impotent. You want to preach Ramakrishna as you have understood him

which is mighty little. Hands off! Who cares for your Ramakrishna? Who cares for your Bhakti and Mukti? Who cares what the scriptures say? I will go to hell cheerfully a thousand times, if I can rouse my countrymen, immersed in Tamas, and make them stand on their own feet and be Men, inspired with the spirit of Karma Yoga. I am not a follower of Ramakrishna or anyone, I am a follower of him only who carries out my plans! I am not a servant of Ramakrishna or anyone, but of him only who serves and helps others, without caring for his own Mukti."

His voice became choked, his whole frame shook with intense emotion. He could not contain himself any longer. Tears streamed from his eyes. Like a flash of lightning he was up on his feet and ran from the room to his sleeping apartment. His Gurubhais were seized with fear and repented of their criticisms spoken to him in that strain. A few of them followed the Swami, some minutes later, to his room. Entering with cautious steps, they found him sitting in meditation posture, his whole frame stiff, tears flowing from his half-closed eyes, the hairs of his body standing on end. He was absorbed in, what seemed to them, Bhâva-Samâdhi! Nearly an hour; the Swami got up, washed his face and came out to his waiting friends in the sitting-room. The atmosphere was too tense for words. Finally the Swami broke the silence thus:

"When one attains Bhakti one's heart and nerves become so soft and delicate that they cannot bear even the touch of a flower! Do you know that I cannot even read a novel nowadays! I cannot think or talk of Sri Ramakrishna long, without being overwhelmed. So I am trying and trying always to keep down the rush of Bhakti welling within me. I am trying to bind and bind myself with the iron chains of Jnâna, for still my work to my motherland is unfinished, and my message to the world not yet fully delivered. So, as soon as I find that Bhakti feelings are trying to come up to sweep me off my feet, I give a hard knock to them and make myself adamant by bringing up austere Jnâna. Oh, I have work to do! I am a slave of Ramakrishna, who left his work to be done by me and will not give me rest till I have finished it! And, oh, how shall I speak of him! Oh, his love for me!"

Swami Yogananda and others fearing a repetition of the above experience gently interrupted him by asking if he would not like to have an evening stroll on the roof of the house as it was too warm in the room. Then they took him up there and diverted his thoughts by small talk, till it was far into the night and he was his normal self again.

This incident is very significant, exposing as it does the depths of the Swami's inner nature, namely, that of Bhakti, and also as it gives an idea of the tremendous cost at which his Jnâna and his spirit of service to others had been acquired. The monks of the Order ever sought to divert his attention from such tempestuous outbursts, for that would bring him closer to his real nature, when they knew he would tear off all mortal bonds and soar, through Mahâsamâdhi, into the region of the Supreme Consciousness of Brahman. Reflecting on such moments in the Swami's life, one of the greatest of his Sannyâsin Gurubhais has said, "You see, the Master has brought us all into this world to keep his (the Swami's) mind diverted to external matters and to his various plans of work, so that he may live long enough to fulfil our Master's mission. Otherwise he may fly off at any time to the sphere of Nirvikalpa Samâdhi."

So profound and convincing was the impression created, that never more was any protest made against his plans and methods of work. It was like the clearing of the atmosphere, which had been overhung with clouds of doubt, now and again breaking forth into storms of conflict of ideals. Everyone realised as never before that the Master was at the back of Vivekananda working through him.

XXX

IN NORTHERN INDIA

Unfortunately the Swami's health was causing him trouble. He was counselled by his physicians and urged by his Gurubhais to start as soon as possible for the dry and cool climate of Almora whither Miss Muller, who had joined him in Calcutta from England, and Mr. Goodwin had already preceded him. He had received repeated invitations from the residents of that hill-station to visit them. Accordingly he left Calcutta on May 6, in the company of some of his Gurubhais and disciples.

The Swami met with a most cordial welcome at Lucknow where he remained one night on his way to Almora. At Kathgodam he was met by several of his Almora admirers and Mr. Goodwin who had come down to receive him. At Lodea, close to Almora, there was a huge crowd of citizens waiting, in the afternoon, to convey him along the final part of his journey, and at their request the Swami mounted a horse dressed in handsome trappings and headed a procession into the town. It seemed that, as the Bazar was reached, every citizen of the place had joined the company. Thousands of Hindu ladies from the tops of houses and from windows, showered flowers and rice on the Swami, as he passed along. In the centre of the town, a section of the Bazar street had been turned into a pandal capable of holding three thousand people. Pandit Jwala Dutt Joshi read first a Hindi address of welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee. Pandit Hari Ram Pande followed with a second address from the Swami's host, Lala Badri Sah Thulgharia, and a Pandit read an equally appreciative address in Sanskrit.

The Swami made a brief reply, in which he touched feelingly upon the spiritualising influence that the blessed Himalayas had exerted on Indian thought, and how he himself had longed from his very youth to pass his days in their midst. Though he knew that he would never be able to do so in the way he had planned, still he prayed that "that silence and unknownness of the ancient Rishis," would be given to him, so that he might pass the last part of his life in peace and meditation there. He said that at the very sight of those mountains, all the propensities to work, that ferment that had been going on in his brain for years, seemed to quiet down, and his mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas stand for—Renunciation!

Again the Swami was busy. Whole days passed in holding religious discourse with numerous visitors. In spite of his not getting rest, his health improved gradually.

Amongst those who accompanied the Swami to Almora or met him there or who accompanied him later in his journeys through Northern India, were Swamis Yogananda, Niranjanananda, Adbhutananda, Achyutananda, Vijnanananda, Sadananda, old Sachchidananda, Suddhananda, Brahmachâri Krishnalâl, and Mr. J. J. Goodwin. With these the Swami passed many an hour of fun as well as of religious instruction.

But the Swami was not to be left in peace. Since his landing on Indian soil with unprecedented ovations and homage from the nation as a whole, a persistent campaign of misrepresentation of his work and influence and baseless attacks on his character were being made, chiefly by certain interested American Missions in India and in the United States, in their endeavour to thwart his work during his absence, and to check the ever-increasing tide of religious revival which his triumphal progress through Southern India had aroused. False and base reports communicated to American papers about the Swami's success and his propaganda, calculated to discredit him, found wide publicity and were made capital of in the United States, giving rise to fierce criticism. Though heaps of these newspaper cuttings reached him, the Swami, not in the least daunted, treated them with utter indifference. It is needless to speak of them in detail, as the Swami's own words written in private letters and those of his American friends and disciples who stood up in his defence are amply explanatory. It is a pity that a distinguished Christian Divine like Dr. Barrows, who came out to India on a lecture tour shortly before the Swami's return from the West, made no secret of his feelings of jealousy and distrust while he was in this country and after his return home. As early as January 30, 1897, the Swami had written to a friend in Chicago:

> "I had written a letter to my people from London to receive Dr. Barrows kindly. They accorded him a big reception, but it was not my fault that he could not make any impression in Calcutta. . . . Now Dr. Barrows thinks a world of me, I hear. Such is the world!"

The very evening of his landing in California on May 10, Dr. Barrows was reported to have made remarks in an interview with the representative of the "Chronicle," which according to the paper, "would make that Indian personage's ears tingle if he could hear them." Here are some excerpts:

> "The Swami arrived in Madras one week ahead of me, but he did not call upon me to renew our acquaintanceship.

Instead, he hurriedly left Madras the day after I arrived. All that the "Chronicle" credited him with saying about the women of America is true, and knowing that he had been telling lies he avoided me. There is one thing I want to correct however. The Swami has not lost caste through his conduct. It transpires that he never was a Brahmin. He belongs to the Sudra caste, the lowest of the respectable caste in India. All that he has said about American women and American institutions disgusted some of the Hindus I met. They came to me and declared that he did not represent or preach their faith.

"What I particularly obejct to in Vivekananda is his ridiculous and exaggerated statement about the influence of Hindu speakers in England and America. He is a man of brilliant and pleasant qualities, but he seems to have lost his head. I could never tell whether to take him seriously or not. He struck me as being a Hindu Mark Twain.

"He is a man of genius and has some following, though only temporary."

The Swami says that in no speech, in no interview, and in no conversation had a single word fallen from him derogatory to American women. On the contrary he lost no opportunity of speaking of their generosity and kindness and of their sincerity in the search for truth. The other charge is equally untrue. When asked about his mission, the Swami repeatedly avoided answering at all, and when pressed to talk on the subject, spoke with a modesty which would well become some of those who appear to be seeking notoriety at his expense.

Mrs. Sara C. Bull writing in defence of the Swami to Dr. Lewis G. Janes on June 7, says:

" Thank you for the California clipping. Since Dr. Barrows so unqualifiedly denounces Vivekananda as a liar and for that reason charges him with intent to avoid him at Madras, I regret, for his own good, that Dr. Barrows should have omitted all mention of the Swami Vivekananda's widely circulated letters of welcome urging upon the Hindus, whatever their views of Dr. Barrows' message concerning their and his own religion might be, to offer a hospitality of thought and greeting worthy of the kindness extended to the Eastern delegates at Chicago by Dr. Barrows and Mr. Bonney. Those letters circulated at the time when the Indian nation was preparing a welcome unprecedented for warmth and enthusiasm to the monk, contrast markedly with Dr. Barrows' recent utterances in California, on his own home-coming, concerning Vivekananda, and bring the two men before the Indian public for their judgment. . . .

"It may be added in this connection, that Vivekananda was wearied to the extreme and was threatened with a breakdown in health from the first to the last of his public receptions on Indian soil, and, finally, by command of his physician obliged to forgo more fatigue and take absolute rest for some months' time. Vivekananda having been my guest, attacks concerning him are sent to me, and I know that for two years previous to his return to India the Swami was quoted both here and there as having denounced American women at different points in India, showing that he has a double or that his opponents pass on, as does Dr. Barrows, sentiments deemed for his utterance, omitting the sum and substance of what he has uttered again and again. The dry humour of American pleasantries not infrequently used by gentlemen, but unsafe for my foreigner, occasionally tempt the monk with his rare facility in the use of English, to a misplaced and out-of-taste quotation, while it is also true that his habitual self-control is under strong provocation sometimes lost; but a fair opponent he is and, I can testify, to even unfair and untruthful detractors. With the power held in common with great preachers and artists to draw to himself emotional men and women, it is to his credit that he may sometimes use harsh characterisation rather than permit a blind following to himself.

"The homes open to the Swami Vivekananda in the United States would honour any man. His friends will agree with Dr. Barrows that he has genius, not for geniality alone, but for intellectual power and the modesty of the true scholar, that will guard him from egotism and vanity. He deals as few can with agnosticism and atheism, and gives earnest students a philosophical analysis that establishes Religion, embracing the sectarian religions, and in spirituality he has the childlikeness of spirit that will make him the loving servant of his people.

"It is always painful to encounter workers rightly devoted to sectarian interests and service, indulging in the present rule of habitual asperities and quick distrust rather than looking for points of contact. I send you quotations from the Swami's letters to India and here, giving in reply Vivekananda's sober opinions to the points of attack as made by Dr. Clark, Dr. Barrows and others. Pray use them or my own estimate as you deem fit.

"P. S. The allusion to Vivekananda's exaggerated statement of his Western work and Mission is as mistaken as Dr. Barrows' suggestion that he has only a temporary influence. Vivekananda returns *not Europeanised,* and the urgent calls to be filled as soon as his health permits are evidence of this. I believe him as one to welcome all true religious workers there.

"The German schools, the English Orientalists and our own Emerson testify to the fact that it is literally true that Vedântic thought pervades the Western thought of today, and it is in this sense only that Vivekananda could mean that thousands in the West are Vedântists,—a philosophy able to include sectarians."

The following quotations from the Swami's letters written during these times to intimate disciples in America, referring to the above controversy and certain others from rival bodies in India, furnish the key to his position and to his conduct. Writing on February 25, he says:

"I have not a moment to die, as they say. What with processions and tòm-tomings and various other methods of reception all over the country I am *nearly dead.* . . . On the other hand, the country is full of persons jealous and pitiless who would leave no stone unturned to pull my work to pieces.

"But as you know well, the more the opposition the more is the demon in me roused."

Remarking on the cause of the failure of Dr. Barrows' mission in India he writes in his letter of April 28, 1897:

"Dr. Barrows has reached America by this time, I hope. Poor man! He came here to preach the most bigoted Christianity, with the usual result that nobody listened to him. Of course they received him very kindly, but it was my letter that did that. I could not put brains into him! Moreover, he seems to be a queer sort of man. I hear that he was angry at the national rejoicings over my home-coming. You ought to have sent a brainier man anyway, for the Parliament of Religions has been made a farce of to the Hindu mind by Dr. Barrows. On metaphysical lines no nation on earth can hold a candle to the Hindu,—and curiously all those that come over here from Christian lands to preach, have that one antiquated foolishness of an argument that the Christians are powerful and rich and the Hindus are not, ergo Christianity is better than Hinduism, to which the Hindu very aptly retorts, that that is the very reason why Hinduism is a religion and Christianity is not; because, in this beastly world, it is blackguardism and that alone that *prospers;* virtue always suffers. It seems, however advanced the Western nations are in scientific culture, they are mere babies in metaphysical and spiritual education. Material science can only give worldly prosperity, whilst spiritual science is for eternal life. If there be no eternal life, still the enjoyment of spiritual thoughts as ideals is keener and makes a man happier, whilst the foolery of materialism leads to competition and undue ambition and ultimate death, individual and national.

". . . Do you know Dr. Colston Turnbull of Chicago? He came here a few weeks before I reached India. He seems to have had a great liking for me, with the result that Hindu people all liked him very much."

". . . I am going to grow a big beard, now that my hair is turning grey. It gives a venerable appearance and saves one from American scandalmongers. O thou white hairs, how much thou canst conceal! All glory unto thee, Hallelujah!"

Justifying his plain-speaking on certain occasions in India, which gave offence to the parties concerned, he writes to a friend on May 5:

"About the———s, and the———s, you must remember first that in India, they are nonentities. They may publish a few papers and make a lot of splash and try to catch Occidental ears, but I do not know if there are two dozen———s of Hindu birth and two hundred ———s in the whole of India. I was one man in America and another here. Here the whole nation is looking upon me as their authority,—there I was a much-reviled preacher. Here princes draw my carriage,—there I would not be admitted to a decent hotel! My utterances here, therefore, must be for the good of the race, my people,—however unpleasant they might appear to a friend's acceptance. Love and toleration for everything sincere and honest—but never for hypocrisy! The ——s tried to fawn and flatter me, as I was ' the authority ' in India. Therefore it was all the more necessary for me to stop my work from lending any sanction to their hypocrisies, by a few bold decisive words, and the thing was done. I am very glad of it. . . . Let me again tell you that India is already Ramakrishna's and for a *purified* Hinduism, whether I live a few years more or not."

On June 3, he writes from Almora in a mood of Vairâgyam:

"As for myself I am quite content. I have roused a good many of our people and that was all I wanted. Let things have their course and Karma its sway. I have no bonds here below. I have seen life and it is all self,—life is for self, love for self, honour for self, everything for self. I look back and scarcely find any action that I have done for self,—even my wicked deeds were not for self. So I am content. Not that I feel I have done anything specially good or great, but the world is so little, life so mean a thing, existence so, so servile,—that I wonder and smile that human beings, rational souls, should be running after the self—so mean and detestable a prize!

"This is the truth: We are caught in a trap and the sooner one gets out the better for one. I have seen the truth, let the body float up or down, who cares!

"I was born for the life of the scholar—retired, quiet, poring over my books. But the Mother dispenses otherwise. Yet the tendency is there."

And on July 9, he is seen writing the following letter to an intimate friend in America who grew nervous and uneasy at the repeated attacks made against him in the newspapers, being afraid that these might injure his cause there. The letter shows the Swami in his combative spirit, his righteous indignation roused under extreme provocation to express himself in a masterpiece of self-defence and passionate monasticism:

". . . I had also a lot of cuttings from different American papers fearfully criticising my utterances about American women and furnishing me with the strange news that I had been outcasted! As if I had any caste to lose, being a Sannyâsin!!

"Not only no caste has been lost, but it has considerably shattered the opposition to sea-voyage, my going to the West. If I should have to be outcasted, I would have to be done so with half the ruling princes of India and almost all of educated India. On the other hand, the leading Raja of the caste to which I belonged before my entering the Order publicly got up a banquet in my honour, at which were most of the *big bugs* of that caste. The Sannyâsins, on the other hand, *may not* dine with anyone in India as beneath the dignity of Gods to dine with mere mortals, as they are Nârâyanas, while the others are mere men. And dear M.——, these feet have been washed and wiped and worshipped by the descendants of a hundred kings and there has been a *progress* through the country which none ever commanded in India.

"It will suffice to say that the police were necessary to keep order if I ventured out into the streets! That is outcasting indeed!! Of course, that took the starch out of the Missoos, and who are they here?—Nobodies. We are in blissful ignorance of their existence all the time. I had in a lecture said something about the Missoos and the origin of that species, except the English Churchmen, and in that connection I had to refer to the very churchy women of America and their power of inventing scandals. This the Missoos are parading as an attack on American women *en masse* to undo my work there, as they well know that anything said against themselves will rather please the U. S. public. My dear M——, supposing I had said all sorts of fearful things against the 'Yanks,' would that be paying off a millionth part of what they say of our *mothers and sisters*? 'Neptune's waters' would be perfectly useless to wash off the hatred the Christian 'Yanks' of both sexes bear to us, 'heathens of India,'—and what harm have we done them? Let the 'Yanks' learn to be patient under criticism and then criticise others. It is a well-known psychological fact that those who are ever ready to abuse others cannot bear the slightest touch of criticism themselves. Then again, what do I owe them? Except your family, Mrs. B——, the Leggets and a few other kind persons, who else has been kind to me? Who came forward to help me work out my ideas? I had to work till I am at death's door and *had to spend nearly the whole of my best energies in America,* so that they might learn to be broader and more spiritual! In England I worked only six months. There was not a breath of scandal save one, and that was the working of an American woman, which greatly relieved my English friends—not only no attacks, but many of the best English Church clergymen became my firm friends, and without asking, I got much help for my work and I am sure to get much more. There is a society watching my work and getting help for it, and four highly respected persons followed me to India to help my work, braving everything and dozens were ready, and the next time I go, hundreds will be!

"Dear, dear M——, do not be afraid for me. . . . The world is big, very big, and there must be some place for me, even if the 'Yankees rage.' Anyhow, I am quite satisfied with my work. I never planned anything. I have taken things as they came. Only one idea was burning in my brain,—to start the machine for elevating the Indian masses and that I have succeeded in doing to a certain extent. It would have made your heart glad to see how my boys are working in the midst of famine and disease and misery, nursing by the mat-bed of the cholera-stricken Pariah and feeding the starving Chandâla, and the Lord sends help to me, and to them all. 'What are men?' He is with me, the Beloved, as He was when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about, unknown, from place to place in India. What do I care about what they talk,—the babies,—they do not know any better. What! I, who have realised the Spirit and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle! Do I look like that?

"I had to talk a lot about myself because I owed that to you. I feel my task is done—at best, three or four years more of life is left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing for certain that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next. And may I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship.

" 'He Who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the omnipresent; break all other idols!'

" 'In Whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death, nor going, nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship; break all other idols!'

"My time is short. I have got to unbreast whatever I have to say, without caring if it smarts some or irritates others. Therefore, my dear M——, do not be frightened at whatever drops from my lips, for the Power behind me is not Vivekananda but He, the Lord, and He knows best. If I have to please the world, that will be injuring the world; the voice of the majority is wrong, seeing that they govern and make the sad state of the world. Every new thought must create opposition, in the civilised a polite sneer, in the savage, vulgar howls and filthy scandals.

"Even these earth-worms must stand up erect. Even children must see light. . . . A hundred waves of prosperity have come and gone over my country. We have learnt the lesson which no child can yet understand. It is vanity, this hideous world of Mâyâ. 'Renounce' and be happy. Give up the ideas of sex and possessions. There is no other bond. Marriage and sex and money are the only living devils. All earthly love proceeds from the *body, body, body.* No sex, no possessions; as these fall off, the eyes open to spiritual vision. The soul regains its own infinite power. . . ."

In connection with this matter and as a further explanation of the Swami's attitude towards American women *en masse,* no better evidence of his esteem for them can be adduced than an excerpt from a private letter he wrote in 1894 to the Raja of Khetri:

" 'It is not the building that makes the Home, but it is the wife that makes it,' says a Sanskrit poet, and how true it is! The roof that affords you shelter from heat and cold and rain is not to be judged by the pillars that support it,—the finest Corinthian columns though they be, but by the real spirit-pillar who is the centre—the real support of the home—the women. Judged by that standard, the American home will not suffer in comparison with any home in the world.

"I have heard many stories about the American home; of liberty running into licence, of unwomanly women, smashing under their feet all the peace and happiness of the home life in their mad liberty-dance, and much nonsense of that type. And now after a year's experience of the American homes, of American women,—how utterly false and erroneous that sort of judgment appears! American women! A hundred lives would not be sufficient to pay my deep debt of gratitude to you! I have not words enough to express my gratitude to you.

The Oriental hyperbole alone expresses the depth of Oriental gratitude. 'If the Indian Ocean were an inkstand, the highest mountain of the Himalayas the pen, the earth the scroll, and the time itself the writer, still it will not express my gratitude to you!'

"Last year I came to this country in summer, a wandering preacher of a far distant country, without name, fame, wealth or learning to recommend me,—friendless, helpless, almost in a state of destitution,—and American women befriended me, gave me shelter and food, took me to their homes and treated me as their own son, their own brother. They remained my friends even when their own priests were trying to persuade them to give up the 'dangerous Heathen,'—even when day after day their best friends had told them not to stand by this 'unknown foreigner who may be of dangerous character.' But they are better judges of character and soul, they, the noble-minded, the unselfish, the pure,—for it is the pure mirror which catches the reflection.

"And how many beautiful homes I have seen, how many mothers whose purity of character, whose unselfish love for their children are beyond expression, how many daughters and maidens 'pure as the icicle on Diana's temple' and withal with much culture, education and spirituality in the highest sense! Is America then full of only wingless angels in the shape of women? There is good and bad everywhere, true,—but a nation is not to be judged by its weaklings called the wicked, as they are only the weeds which lag behind, but by the good, the noble and the pure, who indicate the national life-current flowing clear and vigorous.

"Do you judge of an apple tree and the taste of its fruits by the unripe, undeveloped, worm-eaten ones that strew the ground, large even though their number be sometimes? If there is one ripe, developed apple, that *one* would indicate the powers, the possibility and the purpose of the apple tree, and not the hundreds that could not grow.

"And then the modern American women,—I admire their broad and liberal minds. I have seen many liberal and broad-minded men too in this country, some even in the narrowest churches, but here is the difference; there is danger with the men to become broad at the cost of religion, at the cost of spirituality; women broaden out in sympathy with everything that is good everywhere without losing a bit of their own religion. They intuitively know that it is a question of positivity and not negativity, a question of addition and not subtraction. They are everyday becoming aware of the fact that it is the affirmative and positive side of everything that shall be stored up, and that this very act of accumulating the affirmative and positive, and therefore soul-building forces of nature, is what destroys the negative and destructive elements in the world. . . .''

One could continue quoting many passages, descriptive of the Swami's high appreciation of and even esteem for American womanhood. The one quoted, however, gives the spirit which is the key-note to all of them. Though the biographers of the Swami might have overlooked the mention of all these unpleasant controversies and criticism which were of trifling concern to the Swami himself, these had to be considered, in justice to him, as they created a stir at the time amongst his admirers and sympathisers.

Turning now from these distracting thoughts, one finds the Swami supremely happy at the sight of one of his Gurubhais relieving hundreds of the starving and the diseased in the famine-stricken district of Murshidabad in Bengal. Out on his wanderings, Swami Akhandananda was deeply moved at seeing the wide-spread distress in the villages and, though penniless, he at once set himself to work to do what little he could to ameliorate it. On hearing of this, Swami Vivekananda sent two of his disciples, Swami Nityananda and Brahmachari Sureshwarananda, to help in the work, and started a fund at once, to which contributions poured in, chiefly from Calcutta, Benares and Madras, and from the Mahâbodhi Society. Swami Akhandananda managed the matter so well that the District Magistrate of Murshidabad who controlled the Government Relief Fund remarked, "I have been able to relieve myself of all responsibilities with regard to the villages covered by the Swami."

The Swami was also delighted to learn, at this time, of the success of the meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission at Calcutta, and of the Vedânta missionary work that Swami Ramakrishnananda was carrying on with his characteristic zeal in Madras and its neighbourhood. Arrived there at the end of March, he had made himself popular by his exemplary character and his activities, and had delivered a series of lectures on the lives of the Prophets, besides other lectures on the Vedânta philosophy and classes on the Gita and the Upanishads.

When the Swami's visit was drawing to a close his friends in Almora began talking about a lecture. The English residents in the station expressed a wish to hear him, and invited him to give an address at the English Club. Arrangements were therefore made for two lectures in the Zilla School, and one in the Club. There had been a wish expressed by many persons that one of the lectures should be in Hindi. Though unacquainted with the Hindi language the Swami acquitted himself well in the lecture and drew admiration from his hearers for the masterly way in which he treated the subject-matter. The lecture at the English Club was attended by all the English residents in the station. Col. Pulley of the Goorkhas was in the Chair. A short historical sketch of the rise of the worship of the tribal God, and its spread through the conquest of other tribes, was followed by an account of the Vedas. Their nature, character and teaching were briefly touched upon. Then the Swami spoke about the soul, comparing the Western method, which seeks for the solution of vital and religious mysteries in the outside world, with the Eastern method, which finding no answer in nature outside, turns its enquiry within. Passing from this theme, naturally so dear to the heart of a Hindu, the Swami reached the climax of his power as a spiritual teacher when he described the relation of the soul to God, its aspiration and real unity with God. "For some time," writes an eyewitness, "it seemed as though the Teacher, his words, his audience, and the spirit pervading them all, were one. No longer was there any consciousness of 'I' and 'Thou,' of 'This' or 'That.' The different units collected there, were for the time being lost and merged in the spiritual radiance which emanated so powerfully from the great Teacher, and held them all, more than spellbound."

The Swami now regained to some extent his lost health, for a complete recovery it was not. But health or no health, his mission in India and the delivery of his message to her people necessitated constant work, and we next see him whirling to and fro from one province to another, teaching privately, preaching publicly, completing his work, for he felt it was nearing completion, in so far as his physical personality was concerned.

After a stay of two months and a half in Almora, the Swami, desiring to accept pressing invitations to visit various places in the Punjab and Kashmir, came down to the plains. He reached Bareilly on August 9. The Reception Committee composed of the distinguished residents of the city, cordially welcomed him and took him and his party to their clubhouse, where arrangements had been made for their stay. He had hardly arrived when he was attacked with fever. He remained in Bareilly four days, and though ill all the time, gave much time to religious discourse. On the morning of the tenth he visited the Arya Samâj Orphanage, and on the next day as the result of an impressive conversation with a gathering of students on the need of a Students' Society which might conjointly carry out his ideas of practical Vedânta and work for others, one was established then and there. The same day after the midday meal he told Swami Achyutananda that he would live only about five or six years more. It was a significant prophetic utterance, though not treated seriously at the time, inasmuch as he left his body five years later on July 4, 1902.

On the night of the twelfth he left for Ambala, where he stayed for a week. He was met at the station by a large number of people, amongst whom were Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had been at Simla. During his sojourn he daily held religious talks at all hours of the day with many people of different creeds, including Mohammedan, Brâhmo, Arya Samâjist and Hindu, on Sâstric and other topics. On the evening of the sixteenth at the earnest request of a professor of the Lahore College, who wanted to have a record of the Swami's voice, he delivered a short lecture into a phonograph. Though unwell, the next day, he delivered an impressive lecture lasting for an hour and a half before a select gathering of citizens, who applauded him enthusiastically. All through he injected into the minds of his hearers his plans for the improvement of the Motherland. He did not leave Ambala without visiting the Hindu-Mohammedan School, an institution which interested him, because it was a symbol of the spirit of unity between the two great races in India. The Swami received many invitations from various places, but he was so weakened by the fever which he had contracted on his way down from Almora that he was unable to accept any of them.

On the twentieth the Swami with his party including Mr. and Mrs. Sevier arrived at Amritsar where also he was received at the station with great honours; but he stayed there for only four or five hours at the residence of Mr. Todor Mall, Bar-at-Law, for his increasing ill-health made it imperative for him to retire to Dharamsala, a delightful hill-station near by in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. There, with the exception of a few casual visitors, he stayed until the thirty-first, in comparative retirement. About that date he decided once more to return to the plains in order to spread his ideas. Coming back to Amritsar he stayed for two days, during which he had frequent discussions on various religious subjects with Rai Mulraj and other leading Arya Samâjists. From there he went to Rawalpindi and though arrangements had been made for his sojourn there, he left immediately for Murree, again in search of health and in company with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his party. While at this place, he was the guest of Mr. Hansraj, a well-known pleader. He was frequently invited to lecture publicly, but his persistent ill-health prevented this. Several conversations were held, however, in which he gave out his now-celebrated ideas and plans of work in India.

His stay in Murree was short, for on September 6, he deemed it necessary for many reasons to go on a short visit to Kashmir. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier who had come to Murree with the intention of accompanying the Swami to Kashmir were compelled to remain behind, owing to Mr. Sevier having suddenly fallen ill. The day before the Swami's departure, a letter reached him from Mr. Sevier with this news, and with eight hundred rupees in currency notes enclosed as the sum forwarded to him to meet the expenses of his journey. It was seven o'clock in the evening. He turned to a friend and said with an anxious look, "What shall I do with so much money, Jogesh? We are Fakirs,—we are sure to spend it all if it be with us. Let me take only half the sum,—I think that ought to be sufficient for me and my Gurubhais and disciples travelling with me." Saying this he went to see Mr. Sevier, though he was not well at the time, and persuaded him to take back half the money offered.

Leaving Murree, he and his party reached Baramulla by Tonga, on the eighth, whence he started at once for Srinagar by boat. At this place he arrived on the tenth as the guest of Mr. Justice Rishibar Mukhopadhyaya. Here the Swami was literally besieged by visitors. On the third day after his arrival he paid an informal visit to the Palace of the Maharaja, where he was received with marked distinction by two of the higher officials, one of whom, Dr. Mitra, informed him that on the next day Raja Rama Singh, the brother of the ruling Prince, would be pleased to see him. The Swami did not meet the Maharaja as he was then at Jammoo.

The Raja received the Swami with great cordiality and honour making him take his seat on a chair, while he himself sat with the officials on the floor. The interview lasted for two hours, many subjects concerning religion and the rehabilitation of the masses being touched upon. The Raja was deeply impressed, and expressed an earnest desire to help the Swami in carrying out his plans of work.

Until his return to Murree, early in the first week of October, the Swami was busy filling many engagements, of both private and public character, and visiting the places of historic interest with which Kashmir abounds. Sâdhus, Pandits, Vidyârthis, officials of high rank and scores of citizens visited him at the house of his host. Whenever he could be free, he retired to the house-boat which the Wazir of Raja Amar Singh had placed at his disposal. The Wazir himself became an ardent admirer of the Swami. He was often invited by the nobility of the town to dine at their houses, and on one of these occasions he discoursed with many Brâhmans and Pandits assembled there. The Swami also made frequent excursions by boat to near-by places, or visited the Bazars, or listened to singing and instrumental music. On September 20, he went by house-boat to Pampur, and Anantanâg, where he saw the historic temple of Vijbera, and then made his way afoot to Mârtanda, at which place he stayed at the rest-house for pilgrims, and discoursed learnedly to a large gathering of priests. Thence he set out for Acchabal. On the way he was shown a temple, which legend relates to the Pândava times. He was most enthusiastic in his admiration of the exquisite workmanship on this edifice, and stated that it was more than two thousand years old.

Slowly the Swami wended his way back from this interesting place, by boat from the Uhlar Lake, to Baramulla. The delightful climate and the free outdoor life had restored him and he felt some of his old vigour and power.

Returning to Murree he was hailed with rejoicings by the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents and by Mr. and Mrs. Sevier. Here the Swami was alternately the guest of the latter, and of Nibaran Babu, at whose house he received numerous visitors and held many conversations. On the evening of October 14, an address of welcome was presented to him in a meeting on behalf of the Bengalee and the Punjabee residents of Murree. The Swami in reply gave a talk which delighted the audience immensely. The following day he went to Rawalpindi and was cordially welcomed by his host, Mr. Hansraj.

He had been there scarcely two days when he lectured to a considerable audience in the beautiful garden of Mr. Sujan Singh, who was the President of the meeting. For two hours the Swami discoursed lucidly on Hinduism, supporting his arguments with quotations from the Vedas. An English disciple who was present says, Swamiji, with a wreath of flowers on his head and a garland round his neck sometimes strolling in the course of his lecture, as was his wont, and sometimes leaning against a pillar also decorated with foliage, wreaths and flowers, looked in his flowing saffron-coloured robe and sash like a Greek god. Moreover, as a background to this, the audience mostly sitting on the lawn, turbaned and cross-legged, with the sun setting in the distance, made altogether a wondrously picturesque scene."

One catches a glimpse of the intense activity of the Swami at this time, or indeed during most of the time that he was before the public, through an entry in the diary of a devoted companion, which reads:

> " *17th October.* In the morning, Swamiji talked on religious subjects with the visitors at Mr. Hansraj's house. Then he went to the Cantonment to keep an invitation to dinner at Nimai Babu's house, where he talked on religious subjects with the Bengalee gentlemen assembled there. He returned from there at about 3 p.m. After a short rest he went to Mr. Sujan Singh's garden to deliver a lecture on Hinduism. . . . Returning from there he instructed a gentleman in the secret of performing Sâdhanâs. At night he went to supper at Mr. Bhaktaram's house in the company of Mr. Justice Narayandas, Swami Prakashananda, Mr. Hansraj and others. From there he returned home at 10 p.m., and talked with some of his disciples on matters religious, until three o'clock in the morning."

On the night of October 20, he was off again, this time to Jammoo in the Jammoo State of the Maharaja of Kashmir, in response to an invitation from the Maharaja. He was met officially at the station and informed that he was a guest of the State. The Maharaja's library was visited in the evening, and on the day following, the Swami had a long talk with

Babu Mahesh Chandra Bhattacharya, an officer of the Kashmir State, with reference to the establishment of a monastery somewhere in Kashmir.

On the twenty-third he had a long interview with the Maharaja. There were present the two brothers of the Maharaja and principal officers of the State. In the course of the conversation he stressed the foolishness of adhering to meaningless customs and outward observances, and traced the national servility of the last seven hundred years, to the misconception of true religious ideals and to the blind following of all sorts of superstitions. He said, "By committing that which is real sin, such as adultery, etc., one is not outcasted in these days; now all sin, all offence to society, relates to food only!" The Swami then defended his sea-voyage with his usual vigour and pointed out that without travelling in foreign countries real education was not gained. Finally he dwelt upon the significance of preaching Vedânta in Europe and America and upon his own mission and plan of work in India. He concluded saying, "I deem it a great good fortune, if by doing good to my country I have to go to hell!" The Maharaja and others were highly pleased with the interview, which lasted for nearly four hours.

Later in the day he paid a visit to the junior Raja who received him with equal reverence. On the next day, he delivered a public lecture, which pleased the Maharaja so much, that he asked the Swami to deliver another lecture the next day, and further expressed the desire that he might remain at least ten or twelve days longer and address meetings every other day. On the twenty-fifth the Swami inspected the municipal power-house, held discussions on religious subjects and talked about the Arya Samâj; in these talks he pointed out its shortcomings to

Swami Achyutananda in a friendly spirit, and deplored the backwardness of the Punjabees in knowledge. In the afternoon, according to the wish of the Maharaja, he lectured to a large audience for two hours dealing with all the Sâstras from the Vedas to the Purânas. He then paid a visit to the library and saw the illumination of the city on the occasion of the Dewâli festival. The next three days were devoted mostly to the reception of visitors, and in talks with them he gave out many important ideas on the profound truths relating to religion and social ethics. During this tour the Swami spoke and lectured mostly in Hindi. The power and life that he put into the Hindi language was so unique that the Maharaja of Kashmir requested him to write a few papers in that language, which he did and they were greatly appreciated.

On October 29, the Swami paid a final visit to the Maharaja and informed him of his proposed departure for Sialkote as a deputation from that place had come with a pressing invitation. The Prince parted from the Swami with much regret, requesting him, that whensoever he visited Jammoo or Kashmir he must be his guest.

Taking up the thread of the Swami's history from this time until he left Lahore for Dehra-Dun, Mr. J. J. Goodwin, who had accompanied the Swami on his Jammoo trip, writes as follows:

> "Although by no means restored to health, the Swami Vivekananda is in active work again, this time in the North-West. After a visit of some weeks to Kashmir, where his views secured the favourable consideration of H. H. the Maharaja, and assurances of his support in the event of practical work being undertaken in the State, the Swami paid a short visit to Jammoo, lecturing there in Hindi to a most appreciative audience. From Jammoo he went to Sialkote (Punjab) as the guest of Lala Mool Chand, M.A., LL.B., and two

lectures were arranged for him, one in English, and one in Hindi. One theme was common to all these lectures, as to all which have since followed, that religion must be practical to be religion at all. The Swami seems daily to be becoming more emphatic on this point, and is enforcing his views by starting works of various kinds which seem to suit the needs of the places he visits and the characteristics of their people. Thus, at Sialkote, he strongly urged the establishment of an educational institution for girls, and as the result of his two days' visit a committee was formed consisting of most of the influential men of the town, with Lala Mool Chand as Secretary, to at once give the proposal practical effect.

"Lahore was next visited, and the Swami was received at the station by a large crowd, including many of the members of the Sanâtana Dharma Samâj in whose hands the reception was left. He was driven through the picturesque streets of the city to Raja Dhyan Singh's palace, and afterwards put up with Babu N. N. Gupta, the editor of the *Tribune* of Lahore. On Friday evening, he lectured in the large courtyard of the old palace on 'The Problem Before Us.' The numbers present were large and the space available was altogether too small to accommodate all who came to hear, and the necessity for disappointing many, at one time threatened to prevent the holding of the meeting at all. After at least two thousand had been refused admission, there still remained fully four thousand, who listened to an excellent discourse. On the following Tuesday, another large crowd gathered in the Pandal of Prof. Bose's Bengal Circus, to hear the Swami's lecture on Bhakti.

"The third lecture, on the following Friday evening, was a triumphant success. The arrangements, this time entirely made by students of the four Lahore Colleges, were exceedingly good, and the audience, without being inconveniently large, was in every sense representative. The subject for the evening was Vedânta, and the Swami for over two hours gave, even for him, a masterly exposition of the monistic philosophy and religion of India. The manner in which, at the outset, he traced the psychological and cosmological ideas on which religion in India is founded, was marvellously clear, and his insistence that Advaita is alone able to meet the attacks not only of science but also of Buddhism and agnosticism against religious and transcendental ideas, was conveyed in definite language and was full of convincing power. From beginning to end the lecture preached strength—belief in man in order that belief in God might follow—and every word of perhaps the finest lecture the Swami has given in India was itself full of strength. . . . The lecture created great enthusiasm and the Swami found it in no way difficult to induce a number of students, who were his constant attendants while in Lahore, to take steps to put it into practice. In fact, he held a meeting for students, at which, after hearing his suggestions, an association was formed, purely non-sectarian in character, the work of which, as it gradually unfolded, should be to help the poor—and where possible by searching them out in every district of the town,—to nurse the sick poor, and to give night education to the ignorant poor.

"Two days later, the Swami left for Dehra-Dun, on business. . . ."

His non-sectarianism was especially evident in Lahore, for though he was pressed by a certain community of the orthodox Hindus to preach openly against the Arya Samâjists he would not lend himself to their wishes. He did consent, however, at their request, to deliver a lecture on the Srâddha ceremony, in which the Arya Samâjists disbelieve, but in doing so he in nowise attacked them. The lecture was not a public one, but took the form of a conversazione at which were present some of the leading members of both the rival parties. He eloquently discussed on the necessity and uses of the Hindu rite of Srâddha, and defended it in a dignified manner against the attacks made by some Arya Samâjists who came forward to argue with him. In tracing the origin of that time-honoured institution, the Swami said that spirit-worship was the beginning of Hindu religion. At first the Hindus used to invoke the spirits of their departed ancestors in some man, and then worship and offer him food. By and by it was found that the men who acted as mediums for these disembodied spirits suffered very much physically afterwards. So they gave up the practice and substituted instead an effigy of grass (Kushaputtali), and invoking the departed spirits of their ancestors in it offered to it worship and Pindas (balls of rice). The Vedic invocation of the Devas for worship and sacrifice, he pointed out, was a development of this spirit-worship.

Be that as it may, the Swami's mission in the Punjab was, pre-eminently, to establish harmony and peace in place of discord and rivalry among the parties holding divergent views: the Arya Samâjists who stood for reinterpreted Hinduism, and the Sanâtanists who represented the orthodox Hindu community. That he succeeded in bringing this about for the time being at least is evidenced by the fact that the former vied with the latter in showing their regard for him and flocked in numbers to listen to his words. Indeed, so generous was his own attitude towards the Arya Samâjists and so respectful their feeling for him, that for some days there was a persistent rumour to the effect that several of the leading Arya Samâjists desired that the Swami should be requested to become the head of the Samâj itself. He even propounded a method for rooting out the antagonism between the Arya Samâjists and the Mohammedans.

In one of the conversations the Swami deplored the lack of emotion in the Punjabees, remarking that the land of the five rivers was rather a dry place, spiritually, and that the minds of the people should be made responsive to the softer elements of religion by the culture of Bhakti. He thought that the introduction of the system of Sri Chaitanya's Sankirtana, as it is in vogue among the Vaishnavas of Bengal, would be a desirable thing. A proposal was made by some of the Punjabee gentlemen, that there should be a public Sankirtana procession, but the idea had to be given up ultimately on account of some unavoidable events.

It was in Lahore that the Swami met Mr. Tirtha

Râm Goswâmi, then a professor in mathematics at one of the Lahore Colleges. Some time later, this gentleman took Sannyâs and became widely known as Swami Râm Tirtha. He also preached Vedânta both in India and America and gained a considerable following. It was under his guidance that the college students of Lahore did much in helping to arrange for the public lectures which the Swami gave there. Personally he admired the Swami immensely and invited him and his disciples including Mr. Goodwin, to dine at his residence. After dinner the Swami sang a song which begins with: "Jahan Ram wuhan kam nahim, jahan kam, nahin Ram," which translated reads: "Where God-consciousness is, there is no desire; where desire is, there is no God-consciousness." Tirtha Ram himself writes: "His melodious voice made the meaning of the song thrill through the hearts of those present." His host placed his private library at the disposal of the Swami, but of the numerous volumes, the latter chose only "Leaves of Grass" by Walt Whitman, whom he was accustomed to call "The Sannyâsin of America."

One evening Tirtha Ram, accompanied by the Swami, his Gurubhais and a number of young men was walking along a public highway. The party broke into several groups. "In the last group," according to Swami Ram Tirtha's own words, in a letter written later from Darjeeling, "in answer to a question I. was explaining: 'An ideal Mahâtman is one who has lost all sense of separate personality and lives as the Self of all. When the air in any region absorbs enough of the solar heat, it becomes rarefied and rises higher. The air from different regions then rushes in to occupy this vacuum, thus setting the whole atmosphere in motion. So does a Mahâtma marvellously infuse life and spirit into a nation through self-reform.' The Swami's group happening to be silent at the time, he overheard this part of our conversation and stopped suddenly and emphatically remarked, 'Such was my Guru, Paramahamsa Ramakrishna Deva.'"

The relationship between the Swami and Tirtha Ram was most cordial, and before the Swami left, the latter presented him with a gold watch. The Swami took it very kindly, but put it back in Tirtha Ram's pocket saying, "Very well, friend, *I* shall wear it *here* in this pocket."

A touching incident occurred at Lahore, when Motilal Bose, an old neighbour and playmate of the Swami, the owner of Professor Bose's Circus, came to meet him. He was awe-struck at the reverence which hundreds were paying to him. Feeling a little embarrassed, he approached the Swami with the question, "How shall I address you now, as Naren or as Swamiji?" The Swami replied, "Have you gone mad, Moti? Don't you know I am the same Naren, and you are the same Moti?" Indeed, everyone of his old comrades and class-mates, who met him in the days of his glory, after his return from the West, noticed not the slightest change in his ways and behaviour. To quote one instance among many, when Upendra Babu, another class-mate of his, to whom he had prophesied his own future greatness when studying in the Presidency College of Calcutta, came to meet him at Balaram Babu's house, the Swami seeing him enter the room stood up and with outstretched arms embraced him warmly.

It was the state of the Swami's health which was largely responsible for his leaving Lahore, after ten days of strenuous work, for Dehra-Dun. The return to the heat of the plains had caused a relapse of the illness which had taken him to the Himalayas, and he was in consequence forced to postpone his lecture-tour. At Dehra-Dun he led a quiet life for some ten days, but he was never idle. Gathering his disciples about him he would hold a class on Ramanuja's commentary on the Brahma Sutras. This class was continued all the rest of his trip. Even on the way to Khetri, after they had rested from the journey and had had their bath and meal, he would call them and begin the class. He also held classes on the Sânkhya philosophy and appointed Swami Achyutananda to teach it in his presence. Sometimes when Swami Achyutananda, who was a very learned Sanskrit scholar, could not make out the meaning of a text, the Swami would in a few words explain it very clearly. He was interested at Dehra-Dun, as he was also in Kashmir and in Dharamsala in the purchase of a tract of land for an institution for the training of Brahmachârins.

While he was at Dehra-Dun he received constant invitations from Khetri. The Raja of that State was exceedingly eager to give his subjects an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Swami's ideas. Besides, personally, he wished to see the Swami, his Guru. So the Swami started from Dehra-Dun for Rajputana. On the way he visited Delhi, Alwar, and Jeypore. At Delhi he was the guest of Nata Krishna, a man in humble position, whom he had met in his Parivrâjaka days at Hathras. Wealthy residents of Delhi pressed him to become their guest, but he preferred remaining with his old friend. At Delhi he held a long conversazione at which many distinguished persons were present.

Together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and his Guru-bhais and disciples, he visited all the memorable ruins and monuments of the past glories of the Moghul Emperors, which are scattered all round Delhi within a radius of a few miles. Says one who accompanied him: "He vivified the past before us. Indeed, we forgot the present in the past and lived with dead Emperors and mighty Kings of old."

The Swami then went to Alwar where he was accorded a great reception. During his sojourn there, he was lodged with his disciples in one of the residences belonging to the Maharaja, which had been secured by the Swami's followers in Alwar for the purpose. He had several interviews with the principal officials, the Maharaja being at the time unavoidably absent from the State. But the chief attraction of his visit lay in meeting once again his intimate friends and disciples with whom he had passed many a day of his Parivrâjaka life. His present visit was full of touching episodes which revealed the true Sannyâsin he was. For instance, at the railway station, when the reception ceremony was going on and he was surrounded by prominent men, he espied one of his poor but devoted disciples, dressed in humble garb standing at a distance. The Swami without caring for the formalities of reception or for etiquette called aloud, "Ramasnehi! Ramasnehi!"—for that was the name of the man—and having had him brought before him through the crowd of the notables enquired about his welfare and that of his other friends, and talked with him freely as of old. This instance brings to mind a similar occurrence in Madras. During the procession, the Swami, while seated in his carriage of honour, saw Swami Sadananda standing amidst the huge mass that crowded the streets. He at once shouted out: "Come, Sadananda! Come, my boy!" And he made this disciple sit with him in the same carriage.

Among the invitations to dinner that he accepted during his short stay in Alwar was one from an old woman, who had entertained the Swami to Bhikshâ at her house on his former visit. But in her case, the Swami invited himself sending word to her that he longed for some of the thick Chapâtis (unleavened bread) he had had from her hands years ago! Her heart was filled with joy and when she was serving her guests she said to the Swami, "Poor as I am, where shall I get delicacies to give you, my son, howsoever I may wish!" The Swami relished this simple meal saying to his disciples more than once, "Look here! How devout, how motherly this old woman is! How Sâttvic are these thick Chapâtis made by herself!" The Swami knowing her poverty, unknown to her, thrust into the hand of the guardian of the house a hundred-rupee note.

In reporting the Swami's visit to Khetri, Swami Sadananda writes as follows to the *Brahmavâdin* on December 12:

> "... His Highness the Raja of Khetri ordered all the necessary and convenient arrangements on the way from Khetri to Jeypore, and himself drove a distance of twelve miles to receive the Swami. The whole town of Khetri was filled with joy and enthusiasm. The citizens arranged for a grand dinner and brilliant illumination and fireworks in honour of His Highness' successful return from his travels in England and on the Continent, as well as for the advent of Swamiji, whose arrival on such an occasion was looked upon as a Godsend, and doubled the enthusiasm in the hearts of the whole public. His Highness and the Swami were presented with addresses to which were given suitable replies. . . .
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> "On December 11, there was an assemblage in the school premises where both the Raja and the Swami were given numerous addresses from different committees. The Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, the Education Department, Khetri, and the local Young Men's Debating Club, were among those who presented addresses to the Raja. Then many short poems, some of them especially composed in honour of the Raja, were recited by the young boys of the school. Swamiji distributed

> the prizes to the meritorious students at the request of the President, the Raja. The Raja made a brief reply to the addresses presented to him, thanking especially the Ramakrishna Mission, for the Chief of the Mission was present there. . . . Afterwards, Swamiji delivered a brief speech with his usual fluency, in which he thanked the Raja and spoke of him highly, saying that what little he had done for the improvement of India was done through the Raja's instrumentality."

At the reception, his subjects presented the Maharaja, as is customary on such occasions, with five trays full of gold Mohurs, the greater part of which he donated to educational institutions in his State. Then all the officials and subjects present came before the Swami, one by one, in turn, bowed and presented him with two rupees each. This function lasted for two hours. When he left Khetri the Maharaja gave the Swami three thousand rupees which was sent to the Math in charge of Swamis Sadananda and Sachchidananda (senior).

On December 20, the Swami delivered a lecture on "Vedântism," in the hall of the Maharaja's bungalow in which he lodged with his disciples. The audience consisted of the principal gentlemen of the place. Some European ladies and gentlemen were also present. The Swami spoke for more than an hour and a half about ancient civilisations, the Greek and the Aryan. He then traced the influence of Indian thought on Europe, in Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and the Egyptian neo-Platonists, and showed how it even entered Spain, Germany and other European countries at different periods of history down to our own times. He discussed the Vedas and the Vedic mythology and explained the different ideas and stages of worship found therein, in the course of which he pointed out that behind them all stood as the background the idea, **"एकं सत् विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति"**— "That which exists is

One, sages call It variously." Continuing he said that, unlike the Greeks, the Aryans dissatisfied with external nature had gone into the Inner Self, and solved the problem of life by Self-realisation. The Swami then passed on to the consideration of the Dualistic, Qualified-monistic, and Advaitic theories, and reconciled them by saying that they were but steps leading to the final evolution of Advaitism, the last step being "तत् त्वमसि" —"Thou art That." He deplored the system of text-torturing, of which even the greatest commentators were guilty. Ramanuja had distorted the Advaita texts of the Upanishads, while Sankara had done the same with the Dvaita texts. Proceeding further, the Swami regretted that in modern India, "The people are neither Hindus, nor Vedântins,—they are merely 'don't-touchists;' the kitchen is their temple, and cooking-pots, their object of worship. This state of things must go. The sooner it is given up, the better for our religion. Let the Upanishads shine in their glory, and at the same time let not quarrels exist among the different sects."

The Swami had to rest in the middle of his speech, so exhausted was he; the audience waited patiently until he was able to resume. He spoke for another half hour, and explained that knowledge was the finding of unity in diversity, and that the highest point in every science was reached when it found the one unity underlying all variety, and this was as true in physical science as in the spiritual. The Swami closed his address with a tribute to the noble character of the Maharaja who, as a true Kshattriya, had assisted him so materially in spreading the Eternal Truths of Hinduism in the West. The lecture made a lasting impression on the people of Khetri.

To the Swami at Khetri work was both pleasure and rest. Besides lecturing and attending to public functions in his honour he spent the time in riding and sight-seeing with his companions and his royal disciple. A curious incident happened here. When the Maharaja and the Swami were out riding one day, they passed a narrow pathway with overhanging branches of trees and prickly shrubs. The Maharaja just held a branch of one of the shrubs to make way for the Swami. But the Swami did not like his being helped in this way, as he thought it was rather deprecatory of his manhood, and remarked to this effect to the Maharaja. But the Maharaja gave the significant reply, "Well, Swamiji, it has been the duty of Kshattriyas to protect Dharma always," to which the Swami remarked after a short period of silence, "Perhaps you are right."

Next the Swami is seen passing rapidly through Kishengarh, Ajmere, Jodhpur and Indore on his way to Khandwa. At Jodhpur he was the guest of the Prime Minister, Raja Sir Pratap Singh, for about ten days. When he arrived at Khandwa in Indore, as the guest of Babu Haridas Chatterjee, he had high fever, but he soon got over it. After a stay of about a week he left Khandwa for Calcutta. The night before he left, his host pressed him for initiation. He firmly held the Swami's feet and implored him to give him Mantra. The Swami avoided, saying that he did not care to make Chelâs and raise the standard of religious or social Gurudom. He, however, advised his host to remember the simple truth, so often repeated, that man can do what man has done. "Man's constitution," he said, "embodies divine omnipotence and this should be realised and set up as the model of all human action."

The Swami must have had reasons of his own for not gratifying the earnest and pious desire of his kind host, for it is a fact that he had made disciples before and after, though not without making a thorough study of their personalities. As a true teacher he gave special instructions to different individuals according to their religious temperaments and tendencies. Thus to one he would speak of Bhakti, to another of Jnâna, as the highest ideal, but insisted that everyone should stand on his own legs and rely on himself if he wanted to bring to fruition the highest possibilities of his nature.

The Swami had now almost finished his lecturing campaign in India, during which he outlined his plans to bring about a rehabilitation of the Dharma. He pointed out to the nation the points where they were in agreement and on which they could build their glorious future much more glorious than the past. He showed to them the value and significance of the culture they had inherited from their ancestors, —a culture in comparison with which any other civilization past or present paled into insignificance,—till their hearts throbbed at the very name of India. He pointed out clearly that the Indian nationalism was to be based on the greatness of the past though various new things also had to be assimilated in the process of growth. If we have to be true to the genius of the race, if we have to appeal to the soul of the nation, we have to drink deep of the fountain of the past and then proceed to build the future. This heritage from the past, he pointed out, was essentially a religious heritage. The main current of life in India flowed in the field of religion and from this were supplied the demands of the nation in all departments of life; more than once religion had come to the rescue of the life secular. Religion had released in the past political forces when the old ones were found wanting. The fundamental problem in India therefore was to organise the whole country round the spiritual ideal. By religion he meant the eternal principles as taught by the Srutis and not the superstitions and local customs, which are mere accretions requiring a weeding out with a strong hand. Above all he showed that the nation depended upon the character and qualities of its individual members. On the strength of the individuals lay the strength of the whole nation. So each individual, he urged, if he desired the good of the nation as a whole, should try, whatever might be the walk of his life, to build character, acquire such virtues as courage, strength, self-respect, love and service for others. To the young men especially he held out renunciation and service as the highest ideals.

Having finished the lecturing tour the Swami returned to Calcutta, where other aspects of his mission kept him engaged—notably the training of his own disciples, the moulding of their characters so as to enable them to carry into practice his plans for the regeneration of the nation.

XXXI

LIFE AT THE MATH AND TRAINING OF THE DISCIPLES

The next period of the Swami's life in India, from January to October, 1898, comprises his stay in Calcutta and at the Math, which was transferred in February from Alambazar to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house on the western bank of the Ganges in the village of Belur, and a long tour which he made in the Himalayas.

The Swami reached Calcutta from Khandwa about the middle of January. On March 30, he left Calcutta for Darjeeling because he felt a great need for a change. On May 3, he was once more in Calcutta, which he again left on May 4, in company with some of his Gurubhais and disciples both Eastern and Western, for Almora, where he remained till June 10. On June 20, he and his party were in Kashmere, where they remained till about the middle of October. Then he returned to the plains and went with his Western disciples as far as Lahore before he left for Calcutta, where he arrived on October 18. This is a general survey of the Swami's movements during these months.

Of his stay in Calcutta, the story is one of continuous engagements. The Math diary gives an account of his varied activities and occupations. He would be constantly engaged in visiting the houses of devotees or in receiving visitors who came to see him at the monastery or at Balaram Babu's house or in writing theses and replying letters. The training of the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins formed the most important part of his work during this period. He would spend hours with them in meditation, song, study or in relating the experiences of the various stages of Yoga and spiritual insight. He took regular classes in scriptures and often would lecture on the Gita, Upanishads, the material sciences and history of nations or answer questions which he would invite from the members of the Math, giving illuminating solutions to the problems raised.

Among the many functions in which the Swami took part at this time, that of the consecration of the shrine in the newly-built house of Babu Nava Gopal Ghosh, in Ramakrishnapore, was especially interesting. That householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna had invited the Swami with all the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math to perform the installation ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna's image, and his joy knew no bounds when the Swami consented. On February 6, which happened to be the auspicious full-moon day, the Swami with all the monks arrived by boats at the Ramakrishnapore Ghat, and started a Sankirtan procession in which numerous devotees joined as it wended its way through the streets. The enthusiasm was tremendous; the Swami himself was barefooted and robed in simple Geruâ; about his neck hung a Khol (drum), with which he accompanied the song "The Infant Ramakrishna," himself leading the chorus. Hundreds of people crowded the streets to see him, as he passed. When they found him dressed in simple Geruâ like other Sannyâsins, going barefooted through the streets, singing and playing upon the drum, it was hard to believe that this was he who had unfurled the banner of Vedânta in the West. They cheered him vociferously, impressed with his humble and at the same time regal demeanour!

Arrived at the host's residence, the Swami and his party were received with reverence, amid the blowing of conch-shell and the beating of gongs. After a while he was led to the worship-room, which was marble-floored and beautifully fitted, with a throne on which was the porcelain picture of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami was delighted at the room and the collection of materials for worship. The lady of the house, being congratulated by him, said with great humility that she and her family were too poor and unworthy to rightly serve the Lord and asked the Swami to bless them. He replied: "Dear mother, our Lord never in his life lived in such a marble-floored room. Born in a rustic, thatched hut, he spent his days in the simplest way. And," he added in his witty way, "if he does not live here, with all these services of devoted hearts, I do not know where else he should!"

Then the Swami having covered himself with ashes, sat on the worshipper's seat and invoked the presence of Sri Ramakrishna, while his disciple, Swami Prakashananda, recited the Mantras appropriate for installation. It was here in this house that the Swami inaugurated the special Salutation to Sri Ramakrishna. Sitting before the image in meditation after the installation ceremony was over, he composed the following Sloka:

स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।
अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

"Salutation to Thee, O Ramakrishna, the Reinstator of Religion, the Embodiment of all Religions, the Greatest of all Incarnations!"

Day after day, the members of the Order were trained by the Swami, until his ideas became their very own. Through the perspective of his personality they saw the whole sphere of religious life in a new light and interpreted monastic ideals in original ways. Under his inspiration came upon some the desire to practise intense Sâdhanâ and austerities, upon others the yearning to serve the sick and the poor, upon still others the hope of spreading ideas among the great masses. All were saturated with his great spirit and patriotism. He was verily a living fire of thought and soul at this time. Gita ideals, Vedânta, and the ideals of different sects in Hinduism were the constant subjects of discussion and practice but in the foreground at all times was the ideal of the Master. The Baranagore days were oftentimes lived over again. The same old fire was present; the same intellectual brilliance shone forth; the same spiritual fervour was always uppermost.

It must be mentioned here that in the early part of the year 1898, the Swami purchased a large tract of land, about fifteen acres in extent, together with a building on the bank of the Ganges at Belur, almost opposite the Baranagore bathing-ghat, for a big sum, most of which was given to him by his devoted friend and admirer, Miss Henrietta F. Muller. She had met the Swami on his first visit to the West both in America and England and it was she who together with Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and Mr. E. T. Sturdy, met the expenditures of the Swami's English work. Though possessed of large means she was naturally of an ascetic bent of mind and being also liberal minded and spiritual in her outlook she found in the Swami's personality and teaching the essentials for spiritual life. Once she even decided to give up the world. But the Swami persuaded her not to do so, but to help the world as much as she could, by remaining in it and living a selfless life.

The purchasing of this particular site was somewhat in the nature of the fulfilment of a prophecy, for long before his going to the West he had said to some of his Gurubhais, whilst standing on the Baranagore Ghat and when there was yet no thought of a site for the monastery, "Something tells me that our permanent Math will be in this neighbourhood across the river." Though the property was purchased at the beginning of 1898, it did not become the permanent headquarters of the monks until January, 1899. The grounds, which were used as a dockyard for country-boats, were very hollow and uneven, and had to be filled up and levelled; besides many repairs had to be done to the building and a second story added, and one new building, a temple to Sri Ramakrishna, constructed. For all of these except the last, the Swami had sufficient funds which he had received from his London disciples. From every view-point the purchase was a success. That the monastery was on the other side of the river, and four miles by the public road across the Howrah bridge from the metropolis, made it more secluded.

Somewhat later the Swami received a large sum of money from Mrs. Ole Bull. She had made the acquaintance of the Swami at the beginning of his American work and had assisted him in a large way financially. She was well known all over America on account of her philanthropy, her culture and social position as the wife of the celebrated violinist. The Swami was often her guest at Cambridge, near Boston, and was the chief figure, on many occasions at her *salons* to which were invited the most distinguished scholars of the world. Her help on the present occasion put the monastery on a sound financial basis, much to the Swami's relief. It helped him to endow the monastery itself, and to build the temple of Sri Ramakrishna. Thus in all, the monastery, when completed, together with its endowment trust, represented more than one hundred thousand rupees.

The Math at the Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house was full by the time of the Sivarâtri festival, which precedes by three days the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Saradananda had recently returned from America; Swami Sivananda had come back from his Vedânta work in Ceylon, and Swami Trigunatita from Dinajpur after finishing his famine relief work there. The Swami was highly pleased with the work of all of them. He also congratulated Swami Brahmananda on the success of the Ramakrishna Mission under his guidance, and Swami Turiyananda for having, in his absence, trained the young Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins of the Math. At the suggestions of the Swami, the latter prepared, in the afternoon of the Sivarâtri day, thanksgiving addresses in English to everyone of the Swamis, and these were read out to them at a meeting of the Brotherhood held at the Math, the Swami being in the chair. On being called upon by him, his Gurubhais in turn replied in suitable words to the addresses. Of Swami Turiyananda he remarked, "He has the oratorical voice." Before rising to speak, the Swami said: "It is very difficult to address a parlour meeting. Before a large gathering it is easy to forget oneself in the subject of the discourse, and hence one is able to carry the audience with him. But this is not possible when only a few men are present. However, let me try." He gave sound counsel to his Gurubhais and disciples in regard to the line of action they should adopt, both from the individual and the communal aspect.

The actual birthday ceremony of Sri Ramakrishna, as distinguished from its public celebration, took place at the monastery this year under the supervision of the Swami himself. On this occasion the Swami ordered a lot of sacred threads to be brought to the monastery. As one after another of the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna or of himself came, he let it be known that those of them who were not Brâhmanas, but who really belonged to the other two twice-born castes, were on that day to be invested with the sacred thread. Speaking to his Brâhmana disciple Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, whom he commissioned to perform the ceremony, he said: "The children of our Lord are indeed Brâhmanas. Besides, the Vedas themselves say that every one of the twice-born castes has the right to be invested with the sacred thread. They have no doubt become Vrâtyas, that is, fallen from their own ritualistic rights, but by performing the ceremony of expiation they are entitled to their own original caste rights again. This is the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. Everyone will be purified by taking his name. Therefore this is the best occasion to give the Bhaktas the sacred thread. Give all those who come the appropriate Gâyatri Mantra according as they are Kshattriyas or Vaisyas. All these must be gradually raised to the status of the Brâhmana. All Hindus are brothers. It is we Hindus who have degraded some of our brothers, by saying for centuries, 'We won't touch you!' 'We won't touch you!' No wonder that the whole country is reduced to the verge of humiliation, cowardice and stupidity. You must raise them by preaching to them the gospel of hope and cheer. Say to them, 'You are men like ourselves; you have the same rights that we have!'"

As a result of the Swami's decision more than fifty Bhaktas on that day received the Gâyatri Mantra and the sacred thread, having first had their bath in the Ganges and then bowed before the image of Sri Ramakrishna. Of course this procedure was opposed to the orthodox view, but the Swami was determined to impress his ideas boldly upon the public by practical means. The initiates were naturally much ridiculed by their neighbours for having raised themselves to the status of Brâhmanas.

Though the Swami was bold in his attack on the stronghold of modern orthodoxy, he was not usually an advocate of drastic reforms of a destructive nature. He was always in favour of reforms which were constructive through growth from within and in conformity with the Sâstras. In this he, following the Rishis of old, penetrated into the true spirit and meaning of the Sâstras and adapted them to the need of the times, for the good of the race and its religion. The Swami would even have the time-honoured religious institutions and ceremonies strictly observed by the Order. Thus on the occasion of the Sivarâtri festival, he was pained to see that no one at the Math had fasted, as is the custom among devout Hindus.

Following upon the Upanayana ceremony mentioned above, the Sannyâsins of the monastery, joining mirth with devotion, seized upon the Swami and arrayed him as Siva. They put the shell-ear-rings in his ears, covered his whole body with holy snow-white ashes, placed on his head a mass of matted hair which reached to his knees, put bracelets of rosaries on his arms and on his neck hung a long rosary of large Rudrâkshas in three rows. In his left hand they placed the sacred trident. Then they smeared their own bodies with ashes. "The unspeakable beauty of that form of the Swami dressed as Siva," writes Mr. Sarat Chakravarty, "cannot be described; it is something which has to be seen, to be realised. Everyone present declared afterwards that they felt as if Siva Himself, of youthful, ascetic form, was before them. And the Swami with the Sannyâsins seated round him like so many Bhairavas or attendants of the Great God, seemed to have brought the living presence of the majesty of Kailâsa within the precincts of the Math." The Swami sang a hymn to Sri Rama, and inebriated with the name of the Lord went on repeating again and again, "Rama, Rama, Sri Rama, Rama!" He appeared entranced in Siva nature. The sublimity of his expression deepened a hundredfold! His eyes were half shut; he was seated in Padmâsana, while his hand played on the Tânpurâ (a musical instrument). The whole gathering of monks and devotees was caught up in the spirit of the hour and thrilled with religious ecstasy. Everyone seemed intoxicated with draughts of nectar of the name of Rama which issued from the lips of the Swami. For more than half an hour the tensest stillness prevailed and all sat motionless.

The chanting ended, the Swami sang a song in the same state of God-intoxication. Then the Swami Saradananda followed with the song, "The Hymn of Creation," composed by the Swami, the latter himself playing on the drum. After some favourite songs of Sri Ramakrishna had been sung, the Swami suddenly removed his decorations, put them on Girish Babu after smearing his body with ashes, and covered him with a Geruâ cloth, with the remark, "Paramhamsa Deva used to say that G. C. has a little of the Bhairava in him. Aye, there is no difference between him and ourselves." This moved the great dramatist and brought tears to his eyes. When asked by the Swami to speak of Sri Ramakrishna to the assembled devotees, he could only say, after a long silence, with his voice choked with emotion:

"What shall I say of our all-merciful Lord! His infinite grace I feel in that he has given even an unworthy self like me the privilege of sitting on the same seat with such pure souls as you who have renounced Kâmini-Kânchana, 'Lust and Gold,' even from boyhood!"

After this, the Swami briefly addressed those who had received the sacred thread, asking them to repeat the Gâyatri daily at least one hundred times. In the meantime Swami Akhandananda arrived at the Math from his orphanage in Murshidabad. Referring to him the Swami said, "Look! What a great Karmayogin he is! Without fear, caring neither for life nor for death, how he is working with one-pointed devotion for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many!" This led the Swami to speak at length on Karma Yoga, of how the realisation of the Self could be attained by devotedly working for others without attachment, seeing the Self in all. Then the Swami sang a beautiful song, composed by Girish Babu, "The Infant Ramakrishna" in which, among others, are the lines:

"On the lap of the poor Brâhmana's spouse
Who art Thou, O Radiant One, lying?
Who art Thou, O Digambara (Naked One), come to the humble cottage-room?

* * *

Grieved at the world's sore afflictions
Hast Thou come with Thy heart bleeding for it?"

Among the many distinguished visitors who came to see the Swami at this time, was the Buddhist missionary, the Anagârika Dharmapâla. He had come to see Mrs. Ole Bull, who was then residing at the old cottage on the recently purchased Math grounds and had stopped first at the monastery to ask the Swami to accompany him. The weather was exceedingly inclement. The rain was pouring in torrents. After waiting for an hour the Swami and Mr. Dharmapala with a few others decided to start. The path lay across very uneven and muddy ground, particularly in the compound of the new Math which was being levelled. Drenched with rain, his feet slipping in the mud, the Swami enjoyed himself like a boy, shouting with laughter and merriment. Mr. Dharmapala was the only one who was not barefooted and at one place his foot sank so deep in the mud that he could not extricate himself. The Swami seeing his plight, lent his shoulder for support and putting his arm round his waist helped him out, and both laughing walked linked together the rest of the way.

On arriving at their destination, all went to wash their feet; when the Swami saw Mr. Dharmapala take a pitcher of water, he snatched it from his hand, saying, "You are my guest, and I must have the privilege of serving you!" With these words he was about to wash his feet when there arose a loud protest from Mr. Dharmapala. In India, to wash another's feet is considered an act of the humblest service. All those who witnessed the scene were amazed at the Swami's humility.

Another event of these days was the initiation of Swamis Swarupânanda and Sureshwarânanda into Sannyâs on March 20. It was on his third or fourth visit to the Math that the former was so deeply impressed with the long conversation he had with the Swami, that then and there he decided to give up the world and lead the life of practical spirituality under the Swami's guidance. The friends who had accompanied him were startled when they were asked by him to carry the news that he did not mean to return to his home again, a decision to which he rigorously adhered. For several years he had been thinking of the problems of life and death; of how he could break the dream and be of service to the world. Though he had been married in his youth, he had eschewed all marital relations. Living under his parental roof a life of strict Brahmacharya, he was consumed with a burning desire to help his brother man. On meeting the Swami it took him no time to see, as he said in later years, that the opportunities of fructifying his own ideas, which coincided with those of the Swami, would be best afforded by his joining the Order, and he said as much to the Swami, who rejoiced at these words and said to a Gurubhai: "We have made an *acquisition* today!" Much later he said to a friend: "To get an efficient worker like Swarupananda is of greater gain than receiving thousands of gold coins." This highly-qualified disciple, contrary to the general rule of the Order, was initiated into Sannyâs after but a few days' stay at the monastery, so great was the Swami's faith in him. Within a few months he was made the editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* magazine, and when the Advaita Ashrama was founded by the Swami in the Himalayas in the early part of the next year, he was made its President, which substantiated his Guru's great confidence in him.

Four days previous to Swami Swarupananda's initiation Miss Margaret Noble took the vow of Brahmacharya at the hands of her Master on a Friday which happened to be the Christian Feast of the Annunciation. She had first met the Swami in London and had regularly attended his classes and had imbibed more and more of that great Vedânta spirit and as a result she had decided to devote her life to the service of India and the Swami's work. She was given most appropriately the name of Niveditâ, by which she became widely known both in India and abroad, the name itself meaning, "One who is dedicated." As illustrating a vital point in the Swami's character, and the ideal he put before those whom he made his own, the Sister herself gives to her readers a peep into the nature of the dedication ceremony in these words:

> "May one of them never forget a certain day of consecration, in the chapel at the monastery, when, as the opening step in a lifetime, so to speak, he first taught her to perform the worship of Siva, and then made the whole culminate in an offering of flowers at the feet of the Buddha! 'Go thou,' he said, as if addressing, in one person each separate soul that would ever come to him for guidance, 'and follow Him who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES, before He attained the vision of the Buddha!' "

This ceremony was in many respects a momentous event, as the Sister was the first Western woman novice received into any monastic order in India. Another event equally significant of the increasing contact, under the guidance of the Swami, between the West and the East, was the receiving of the European lady disciples in audience by the Holy Mother, the spouse of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna, an orthodox lady of the highest rank. The audience was touching. She addressed her visitors, as "My children." Thence they brought back with them to their cottage for a few hours an aged lady, Gopaler Mâ, whom Sri Ramakrishna used to call 'Mother' in a special sense; they won her over, the most orthodox of Brâhmana widows, even to eating with them, and a week later to living with them for three days.

During these days the Swami did not appear before the Calcutta public except on a few occasions. One of them was on March 11, when he presided at a meeting at the Star Theatre, at which the Sister

Nivedita spoke on "The Influence of Indian Spiritual Thought in England." The Swami spoke briefly on the subject. In introducing the lecturer he spoke of her as "another gift of England to India," the others being Mrs. Besant and Miss Muller, all of whom, he said, had consecrated their lives to the good of India.

When she had finished, the Swami called upon Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Henrietta Muller to say a few words. Miss Muller was hailed with applause when she addressed the audience as "My dear friends and fellow-countrymen," for she said that she and the other Western disciples of the Swami felt in coming to India that they had come to their home, not only of spiritual enlightenment and religious wisdom, but the dwelling-place of their own kindred.

It was in the early part of March when Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod, who had come from America on February 8, took up their residence in the old house on the Belur Math grounds. They had come all the way from America in order to see for themselves the land of their Master's birth, and to come into closer contact with him and his people. Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita) had broken off all English associations and had come to India, on January 28, at the call of the Swami, intending to found, conjointly with Miss Henrietta Muller, an institution for the education of Indian women. It was with great pleasure that the Swami received them, and one sees him henceforth making constant efforts to bring about a deep and comprehensive understanding of the Hindu culture in the minds of his Western followers, by definitely training them. This training, however, was not in the long run confined to his Western disciples only, for, through the facile pen of Sister Nivedita, the ideas they received were transmitted to numerous Western and Eastern readers. Through her writings the more learned and scholarly aspects of the Swami's message to India as a whole were likewise heralded broadcast. Thus, while the Swami was educating the small group of his Western disciples he was at one and the same time speaking to an immense audience. And the ideas which he communicated in these days to his European followers have given tremendous impetus, through Sister Nivedita, to the development of a national consciousness.

While at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house, the Swami was wont to frequent the river-side cottage of his European disciples, even spending hours daily with them. Here under the trees he would reveal to them the deepest secrets of the Indian world, pertaining to its history, its folk-lore, its caste, custom and race. The ideals and realities of Indian religions were interpreted to them in such vivid, poetic and dramatic colours that, "In fact India herself became, as heard in him, as the last and noblest of the Purânas, uttering itself through his lips," though it was true at the same time that whatever the subject of his conversation, "it ended always on the note of the Infinite." He showed no mercy to his Western disciples in their wrong notions and prepossessions with regard to India. He would soften nothing in Hinduism which might at first sight be difficult or repellent to the European mind; he would rather put before them such things in their extreme form, and compel them to enter into their spirit and apprehend their meaning. The most difficult task for the Western disciples was, naturally, the understanding of the Hindu religious ideals and forms of worship, and the Hindu outlook on life. And the Swami would talk for hours, straining his mind and putting his whole heart in his effort to elucidate them. Carried on by his burning enthusiasm the Western disciples caught glimpses of the background of the Hindu thought symbols, so strange to them, and learnt the great outstanding watchwords and ideals of the Indian striving, till they became their very own. Truly, in the Swami, East and West were made one. And in the end his Eastern and Western disciples mingled freely in thought and life. But the distance to be travelled was enormous. The process required a tremendous shifting of personality; and for the European disciples to acquire consciously the culture to which the Indian disciples were entitled by birth, necessitated a complete self-re-orientation,—and the presence of a master mind. And the Swami was infinitely patient. He never showed the slightest irritation at interruptions in the flow of his conversation, however frequent and irrelevant they might be, for he knew perfectly well the difficulties.

The training of his Western disciples who came to India was of momentous concern to Swami Vivekananda as a spiritual teacher and as a great Hindu. He knew that a grave responsibility rested upon him. He knew that for them, coming into close contact with the Indian people in their homes, seeing their manners and habits of dress and food and thought, and realising the material disadvantages of the land and its limitations, would be a crucial test of their faith in and regard for the Vedânta and of their power to further fathom the Hinduism he had preached. But he did not know perhaps that the strangest revelation to them was he himself. In the West he was a religious messenger, an apostle of Hinduism, his sole mission being to voice forth the spiritual message, the eternal wisdom of the far past. His only longing was the liberation of mankind from ignorance and the promotion of a brotherly feeling between different faiths and nations of the world. In India he was more of a patriot, a worker for the regeneration of his motherland, with all the struggle and torture of a lion caught in a net. Baffled and thwarted, not by the numerous formidable obstacles that lay in his path of fructifying his great purpose, but by the growing consciousness of failing health, even at the moment when his power had reached its height, his heart was prone to despair. But undismayed like a great hero he made superhuman efforts to rise to the occasion. Forced to live a comparatively retired life in the monastery, he put his whole soul to the task of making workers carry out his plans and ideas. And among the Western disciples he particularly chose one in whom he had great hope and trust; as such his illuminating discourses were mainly directed to her. If he had done nothing during this period other than the making of Sister Nivedita, he could not be said to have spent the year in vain.

He regarded the coming to India of his Western disciples as a test, an experiment. But had they all turned against him he would not have for one moment allowed himself to think unkindly of them. Had he not written to Sister Nivedita on the eve of her departure from London, "I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedânta, or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man." And what father ever loved his children with a greater love than did he his disciples!

Since the arrival of Miss Noble in Calcutta, the idea of training her to be of service to her adopted land seriously exercised the Swami's mind. In his talks at the river-side cottage at Belur with the

Western disciples he instilled into their minds the Indian consciousness, for he felt that a European who was to work on his behalf for India, must do so absolutely in the Indian way, strictly observing Hindu manners, customs and etiquette even to the minutest detail. Such a one, he demanded, must adopt the food, clothes, language and general habits of the Hindus, and he held up before one of them who was to take charge of the education of Hindu women, the life of Brahmacharya of the orthodox Brâhmana widow as her model, only enlarging the scope of her activities by substituting the selfless service to the Indian people for the loving service to the family. "You have to set yourself," he said to her, "to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Brâhmana Brahmachârini's ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and to cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory." One cannot but acknowledge that such a line of Sâdhanâ was the best means of assimilating that new consciousness which would enable her to grasp the significance of Indian problems. The Swami even insisted that feelings and prejudices that might appear crude, must be reverentially approached and studied, and not blindly ignored and despised. "We shall speak to all men," he said, "in terms of their own orthodoxy!" Of course there were many inconveniences to the Western disciples, often much difficulty, particularly in getting accustomed to Indian diet and Indian manners. Ridiculous blunders were often made, but the Swami would always adjust the difficulty and right the matter.

The Swami was defiant in the defence of the culture of his people. He was ready to beat down mercilessly any other than a living interest in everything connected with the people of his land and thundered against anything that sounded like patronising. He would turn upon the Western disciples if they were guilty of stupid criticism. He demanded that they should come to the task of the understanding of India without prepossessions and with sincerity, and that India must be understood in the light of the spiritual vision. He upset any notion they might have had as to his country being either old or effete, and he often said that only a youthful nation could so readily have assimilated the ideals of a foreign culture. He made them see India, in the light of its ideals and ideas, as young, vital and powerful, as one through its religious vision. He made them see that India's culture was incomparable, being developed through thousands of years of trial and experimentation till it had attained the highest standard ever reached by humanity, and consequently possessed an unshakable stability and strength. He made them see the *why* of every Indian custom. And they saw that though India was poor, it was clean, and that poverty was honoured in the land where religion was understood to be renunciation, and that here poverty was not necessarily associated with vice, as it is so often in the West. To the Swami all India was sacred and wonderful. And later on as he wandered with his disciples from city to city and province to province, he would recount to them the glories and the beauties of the land. The Swami was anxious that his Western disciples should make an impartial study of Indian problems. They were not only to see the glories, but also to have especially a clear understanding of the problems of the land and bring the ideals and methods of Western scientific culture to bear upon the task of finding a solution.

Certainly the training of his Western disciples was an arduous task. Often he contrasted the East with the West, showing alternately the advantages and disadvantages of the varied civilisations of the world. In short, he gave them the *spirit* of India and initiated them into its worth and its values.

In order to bind his Western and Eastern disciples together, the Swami would often deliberately perform some act, strikingly unorthodox, before a large number of his people, such as, showing social preference to his Western disciples, by calling them true Brâhmanas and Kshattriyas, eating or drinking after them, or eating in public the food which they had cooked for him, and even making his brother-monks do the same. To oppose long-standing traditions showed the supreme indifference to criticism and the tremendous sincerity of the Swami. His determination was to make all his disciples one in a real and deep brotherhood. In this the Swami truly united, as it were, the ends of the earth, and brought together the most opposite of human temperaments.

It goes without saying that in training his Western disciples in this way the Swami took into consideration the tendencies and aspirations of the pupils, for he knew that to go against them was assuredly to court disastrous results. Moreover, in such matters as these, it was not his nature to interfere with the liberty of the disciples. He would leave them free to observe, to gain their own experience, even at the cost of making mistakes. Sometimes, however, he would impose upon them long periods of severe restraint. "Struggle to realise yourselves," he would say, "without a trace of emotion!" Or in talking of future methods he would say, "Mind! No loaves and fishes! No glamour of the world! All this must be cut out. It must be rooted out. It is sentimentality,—the overflow of the senses. It comes to you in colour, sight, sound, and associations. Cut it off. Learn to hate it. It is utter poison!"

The period of the training of the Western disciples of the Swami, which extended over nearly the whole of 1898, is filled with many humorous as well as solemn hours. The training which they received shaped their lives irrevocably, and made them apostles, either in a personal or in a public manner, of the greatness of Hinduism and Hindusthan. Some have passed away; some still live. But all alike have instinctively followed out the passionate request which he made to one who had asked him, "Swamiji, how can I best help you?" His answer was, "LOVE INDIA!"

To what extent the ideals set forth before the Western disciples by the Swami through his inspiring talks and personality translated themselves into living realities, is beautifully expressed by Sister Nivedita herself in the following words which she wrote at the year's end by which time, as we shall see, they had been to Naini Tal and Almora with the Swami:

> "Beautiful have been the days of this year. In them the Ideal has become the Real. First in our river-side cottage at Belur; then in the Himalayas, at Naini Tal and Almora; afterwards wandering here and there through Kashmir;—everywhere have come hours never to be forgotten, words that will echo through our lives for ever, and once at least, a glimpse of the Beatific Vision.
>
> "It has been all play.
>
> "We have seen a love that would be one with the humblest and most ignorant, seeing the world for the moment through his eyes, as if criticism were not; we have laughed over the colossal caprice of genius; we have warmed ourselves at heroic fires; and we have been present, as it were, at the awakening of the Holy Child.
>
> "But there has been nothing grim or serious about any of

these things. Pain has come close to all of us. Solemn anniversaries have been and gone. But sorrow was lifted into a golden light, where it was made radiant, and did not destroy.

"Fain, if I could, would I describe our journeys. Even as I write I see the Irises in bloom at Baramulla; the young rice beneath the poplars at Islamabad; starlight scenes in Himalayan forests; and the royal beauties of Delhi and the Taj. One longs to attempt some memorial of these. It would be worse than useless. Not, then, in words, but in the light of memory, they are enshrined for ever, together with the kindly and gentle folk who dwell among them, and whom we trust always to have left the gladder for our coming.

"We have learnt something of the mood in which new faiths are born, and of the Persons who inspire such faiths. For we have been with one who drew all men to him,—listening to all, feeling with all, and refusing none. We have known a humility that wiped out all littleness, a renunciation that would die for scorn or oppression and pity of the oppressed, a love that would bless even the oncoming feet of torture and of death. We have joined hands with that woman who washed the feet of the Lord with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. We have lacked, not the occasion, but her passionate unconsciousness of self.

"Seated under a tree in the garden of dead emperors there came to us a vision of all the rich and splendid things of Earth, offering themselves as a shrine for the great of soul. The storied windows of cathedrals, and the jewelled thrones of kings, the banners of great captains and the vestments of the priests, the pageants of cities, and the retreats of the proud, —all came, and all were rejected.

"In the garments of the beggar, despised by the alien, worshipped by the people, we have seen him; and only the bread of toil, the shelter of cottage-roofs, and the common road across the cornfields seem real enough for the background to this life. . . . Amongst his own, the ignorant loved him as much as scholars and statesmen. Then boatmen watched the river, in his absence, for his return, and servants disputed with guests to do him service. And through it all, the veil of playfulness was never dropped. 'They played with the Lord,' and instinctively they knew it.

"To those who have known such hours, life is richer and sweeter, and in the long nights even the wind in the palm-trees seems to cry—

" 'Mahâdeva! Mahâdeva! Mahâdeva!' "

On March 30, the Swami left Calcutta for another sojourn in Darjeeling, as the guest of the family with whom he had lived before. Here he once more allowed himself the fullest freedom, enjoying his rest in every possible way. In so far as he could, he followed the instruction of his physicians not even to think on any serious subject. When he was only partially restored to health, news suddenly reached him of the outbreak of plague in Calcutta. He hastened down to the metropolis so that he might be of help to his people who were terror-stricken with the new plague regulations. The outlook in Calcutta was threatening. It seemed as if a storm were about to burst. The people were running away in panic. The soldiery were called to quell riots. The Swami grasped the gravity of the situation at once. On May 3, the very day of his arrival at the Math, he was seen drafting and writing a plague manifesto in Bengali and in Hindi. He was greatly concerned and wanted to start relief operations immediately to help the afflicted. When a Gurubhai asked him, "Swamiji, where will the funds come from?", he replied with sudden fierceness of decision, "Why? We shall sell the newly-bought Math grounds, if necessary! We are Sannyâsins, we must be ready to sleep under the trees and live on daily Bhikshâ as we did before. What! Should we care for Math and possessions when by disposing of them we could relieve thousands suffering before our eyes!" Fortunately, this extreme step was not necessary, for he soon received promises of ample funds for his immediate work. It was settled that an extensive plot of ground should be rented at once, and in compliance with the Government plague regulations segregation camps be set up, in which plague patients would be accommodated and nursed in such a manner that the Hindu community would not be offended. Workers came in numbers to co-operate with his disciples. The Swami instructed them to teach sanitation and themselves clean the lanes and the houses of the districts to which they were sent. The relief which this work rendered to the plague patients was enormous, and the measures adopted by the Swami gave the people confidence. This work endeared him to the public, as they saw that he, indeed, was a practical Vedântin, a teacher who brought to bear the highest metaphysical doctrines of the Vedânta on the relief of want and affliction amongst his fellow-men.

The Swami remained in Calcutta until the possibility of an epidemic had passed away, and the stringent plague regulations were withdrawn. Already plans were being formed to make a journey to the Himalayas with his Western disciples. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who had taken up their residence in Almora, after a tour of India, following upon a long stay at Simla, were writing to the Swami to come. Accordingly, on the night of May 11, a large party left the Howrah Station for Kathgodam, whence the journey was to be made to Almora *via* Naini Tal. In the party were Swami Turiyananda, Niranjanananda, Sadananda and Swarupananda, Mrs. Bull, Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita and Miss Josephine MacLeod. It was Mrs. Patterson who had befriended the Swami once, during the early days of his preaching in America, by taking him into her home when she heard with indignation that he was refused admittance because of his colour to the hotels of the city. Since then she had become a great friend and admirer of the Swami, and when she heard of the proposed journey she at once joined the party without caring for the whispered criticism and the probable loss of caste in the official world of Calcutta.

The journey from Calcutta to Naini Tal was throughout most interesting and educative to the Swami's companions. All through the journey the Swami's historic consciousness and love of his country were intensely evident. With passionate enthusiasm he would introduce them one by one to each point of interest as they reached it. As the train passed on and on he related to them the greatness of Patna or Benares, or the splendours of the old Nawab courts of Lucknow, with such ardour and absorption as to create in the minds of his listeners the impression that they were in the presence of one who had lived and moved and had his very being in his country's past. Indeed, there was not one city on which he did not look with tenderness and of whose history he was unaware. When traversing the Terai, he made them feel that this was like the very earth on which the Buddha had passed the days of his youth and renunciation in search of the highest truth. The gorgeous peacocks that now and then flew past, would lend occasion for some graphic account of the invincible Rajputs. The sight of an elephant or a train of camels would bring on a recital of tales of ancient battles or trade, or of the pomp of ancient Rajas or the Moghul court. And then, again, it might be the story of famines and malaria. The long stretches of the plains with their fields, farms and villages would give rise to thoughts concerning the communal system of agriculture, or the beauties of the daily life of the farm housewife, or the hospitality of the poor and humble Indian peasant folk to the Sâdhus. And in the telling of these latter things his eyes would glisten and his voice falter as the memory was stirred of his own days as a wanderer on the face of the Indian continent, when his great pleasure had been to reach some village-compound and watch the home-coming of the cows at dusk. The piety of the Hindu on the banks of the Ganges and the piety of the Mussalman kneeling in his prayers, wherever the ordained hour might find him, were to his eyes equally great and uniquely Indian.

And again in word-pictures he would paint his love for the broad rivers, spreading forests and mighty mountains, all of which were such vital elements in the culture of his people. Even the dry-baked soil of the plains, the hot sands of the desert and the dry gravel-beds and stony tracts of many rivers had their message for him. His contact with his Western disciples, who in their zeal hung on every word that fell from his lips, seemed to make the Swami draw from his knowledge and love for India, the most intense poetic description. From history and scene his mind would travel to culture and he might tell them how in India custom and religion are one. The burning-ghat, the thought of a dead body as a thing impure, because cast off by the soul; the eating of food with the right hand and its use in worship and Japa; the nun-like life of the Hindu widow and her fasts, vigils and other rounds of austerities; the respect for parents as incarnate gods; the Varnâsrama Dharma; the appointed hours of religious service and meditation for the Brâhmana caste; the twofold national ideal of renunciation and realisation represented by the Sannyâsin; the temple which each Hindu house is; the idea of the Ishtam; the chanting of the Vedas by the children of the Brâhmanas in the temple courtyards in Benares and in the South; the Mohammedan kneeling in prayer wheresoever the time of prayer may find him; the ideas of equality and fraternity practised among the followers of the Prophet;—all these, the Swami would say, made up the culture of his land.

The disciples, hearing these graphic descriptions of the life and soul of his land, as they came in poetic or philosophical glimpses, understood now why he had repeated in his reply to the welcome address in Calcutta that which he had said to an English friend on leaving the West: "India I loved before I came away; now the very dust of India has become holy to me, the very air is now to me holy, it is now the holy land, the place of pilgrimage, the Tirtha."

On the morning of May 13, the journey came to an end and the party reached Naini Tal, the Swami stopping there to see his disciple, the Maharaja of Khetri, then staying in the hills. With great pleasure the Swami introduced the Prince to his European disciples. It was here that he met a Mohammedan gentleman, an Advaita Vedântist at heart, who, struck by his extraordinary spiritual powers and personality, exclaimed: "Swamiji, if in after-times any claim you as an Avatâra, an especial Incarnation of the Godhead,—remember that I, a Mohammedan, am the first!" The gentleman became greatly attached to the Swami, and counted himself thenceforth as one of his disciples under the name of Mohammedananda.

The Swami held several conversations at Naini Tal with distinguished residents; in one of these he spoke especially of the illustrious Raja Ram Mohun Roy, of his breadth of vision and foresight, eloquently emphasising the three dominant notes of this great teacher's message, his acceptance of the Vedânta, his patriotism and his acceptance of the Hindu and the Mohammedan on an equal footing. It might be said here that these were also the dominant factors in his own career.

As a striking incident of the ignorance about religion amongst the masses in the West, he related an amusing story. "Once a bishop went to visit a mine. He addressed the labourers and tried to teach them the grand truths of the Bible. In conclusion, he asked, 'Do you know Christ?' One of them responded, 'Well, what is his number?' Poor fellow, he thought that if the bishop would tell him Christ's number, he could find him among the gang of working-men." The Swami continued, "Unlike the Asiatics, the Westerners are not deeply spiritual. Religious thoughts do not permeate the masses. . . . The immorality prevalent amongst Western peoples would strike an Indian visiting London or New York. Hyde Park in London shows in broad daylight scenes which would repel an Asiatic, however degraded he might be."

"The lower classes in the West," he continued, "are not only ignorant of their scriptures and immoral, but are also rude and vulgar. One day as I was passing through the streets of London, in my Eastern garb, the driver of a coal-cart, noticing the strangeness of my dress, hurled a lump of coal at me. Fortunately it passed by my ear without hurting me.

At Naini Tal he met Jogesh Chandra Datta, whom he had known in his school-days at the Metropolitan Institution, and whom he had seen the previous year at Murree. Jogesh Babu proposed to the Swami the advisability of raising funds wherewith to send young graduates to England to compete for the Civil Service, so that on their return they might be of help to India. But the Swami disapproved of the idea: "Nothing of the kind! They would, mostly, turn outlandish in their ideas and prefer to associate, on their return, with the Europeans. Of that you may be sure! They would live for themselves and copy European dress, diet, manners and everything else, and forget the cause of their own country." Speaking of the lethargy and apathy of the Indians for the material improvement of their country and their lack of enterprise, especially on industrial lines, he literally wept with pain. The tears running down his face moved the audience deeply. Jogesh Babu writes:

> "I shall never forget that scene in my life! He was a Tyâgi, he had renounced the world, and yet India was in the inmost depth of his soul. India was his love, he felt and wept for India, he died for India. India throbbed in his breast, beat in his pulses, in short, was inseparably bound up with his very life. . . ."

From Naini Tal, the Swami went to Almora where with his Gurubhais and Sannyâsin disciples he became the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, at Thompson House. His Western disciples took a house near by. It was the Swami's habit, after having risen early and taken a walk with his Gurubhais, to visit the house of Mrs. Bull and her guests, where after joining in their early breakfast, he held conversations for some hours on all conceivable topics. It was here, especially, that Sister Nivedita, who was regarded by this time by the Indian people as the spiritual daughter of the Swami, received her great training at the hands of her Master. It was a training which revealed the greatness of the Master as also the enormous difficulty and struggle which confront the European mind in identifying itself with Indian ideals and Indian culture. Between these two strong personalities a conflict of wills commenced. The Sister's whole mental outlook was aggressively Occidental and intensely English. Consequently, almost all along the line of contact between her mind and her Master's, points of distinction were emphasised; and the Swami, because he wanted to infuse into her his own passionate love of India, did not spare her. Concerning this period of trial Sister Nivedita speaking of herself writes many years later as follows:

"But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this; never the dictating of opinion or creed; never more than emancipation from partiality. Even at the end of the terrible experience, when this method, as regarded race and country, was renounced, never to be taken up systematically again, the Swami did not call for any confession of faith, any declaration of new opinion. He dropped the whole question. His listener went free. But he had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her to rest, until later, by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments stood rationalised and accounted for. . . . But at the time they were a veritable lion in the path, and remained so until she had grasped the folly of allowing anything whatever to obscure to her the personality that was here revealing itself. . . . In every case it had been some ideal of the past that had raised a barrier to the movement of her sympathy, and surely it is always so. It is the worships of one era which forge the fetters of the next.

"These morning talks at Almora then, took the form of assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic, or of long comparisons of Indian and European history and sentiments, often containing extended observations of very great value. One characteristic of the Swami was the habit of attacking the abuses of a country or society openly and vigorously when he was in its midst, whereas after he had left it, it would often seem as if nothing but its virtues were remembered by him. He was always testing his disciples, and the manner of these particular discourses was probably adopted in order to put to the proof the courage and sincerity of one who was both woman and European."

His intellectual conflict with the Sister resulted day after day in a gradual Hinduising, or better said, Indianising of her mind. He, however, admired this hesitation on her part in accepting foreign ideas; and once, he comforted her with the remark that in his own case he had had a similar fight with his own Master before accepting his.

How this constant clash and conflict of sentiments came to an end in peace, may be best told here in the language of the Sister herself:

> "And then a time came when one of the older ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however, he returned, and finding us together in the Verandah, he turned to her and said, with the simplicity of a child, 'You were right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace.' Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exaltation came into his voice as he said, 'See! The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. . . . It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments. And I have told its story, only that I may touch upon its sequel. Long, long ago, Sri Ramakrishna had told his disciples that the day would come when his beloved 'Naren' would manifest his own great gift of bestowing knowledge with a touch. That evening at Almora, I proved the truth of this propecy. For alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite Good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me. I learnt, too, on the physical plane, the simple everyday reality of the experience related in the Hindu books on religious psychology. And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation, only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place."

The Swami's discussions and teachings of these days that are recorded, though meant for his European disciples especially, were of great value to his own countrymen. His thought touched all angles of vision, and through him were made visible vital aspects of human wisdom in the light of the Supreme Realisation. Some of these morning talks at Almora have been recorded by Sister Nivedita in her charming little book, "Notes of Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda," from which we cannot do better than quote the following extracts, which though lengthy will be found most interesting and instructive:

"The first morning, the talk was that of the central ideals of civilisation,—in the West, truth, in the East, chastity. He justified Hindu marriage-customs, as springing from the pursuit of this ideal, and from the woman's need of protection, in combination. And he traced out the relation of the whole subject to the Philosophy of the Absolute.

"Another morning he began by observing that as there were four main castes,—Brâhman, Kshattriya, Bunea, Sudra,—so there were four great national functions, the religious or priestly, fulfilled by the Hindus; the military, by the Roman Empire; the mercantile, by England today; and the democratic, by America in the future. And here he launched off into a glowing prophetic forecast of how America would yet solve the problems of the Sudra,—the problems of freedom and co-operation,—and turned to relate to a non-American listener, the generosity of the arrangements which that people had attempted to make for their aborigines.

"Again, it would be an eager *rêsumê* of the history of India or of the Moguls whose greatness never wearied him. Every now and then, throughout the summer, he would break out into descriptions of Delhi, and Agra. Once he described the Taj as 'a dimness, and again a dimness, and there—a grave!' Another time, he spoke of Shah Jehan, and then, with a burst of enthusiasm,—Ah! *He* was the glory of his line! A feeling for, and discrimination of beauty that are unparalleled in history. And an artist himself! I have seen a manuscript illuminated by him, which is one of the art-treasures of India. What a genius!' Oftener still, it was

Akbar of whom he would tell, almost with tears in his voice, and a passion easier to understand, beside that undomed tomb, open to sun and wind, the grave of Secundra at Agra.

"But all the more universal forms of human feeling were open to the Master. In one mood he talked of China as if she were the treasure-house of the world, and told us of the thrill with which he saw inscriptions in old Bengali (Kutil?) characters, over the doors of Chinese temples. Few things could be more eloquent of the vagueness of Western ideas regarding Oriental peoples than the fact that one of his listeners alleged untruthfulness as a notorious quality of that race. As a matter of fact the Chinese are famous in the United States, where they are known as businessmen, for their remarkable commercial integrity, developed to a point far beyond that of the Western requirement of the written word. So the objection was an instance of misrepresentation, which, though disgraceful, is nevertheless too common. But in any case the Swami would have none of it. Untruthfulness! Social rigidity! What were these, except very, very relative terms? And as to untruthfulness in particular, could commercial life, or social life, or any other form of co-operation go on for a day, if men did not trust men? Untruthfulness as a necessity of etiquette? And how was that different from the Western idea? Is the Englishman always glad and always sorry at the proper place? But there is still a difference of degree? Perhaps—but only of degree!

"Or he might wander as far afield as Italy, 'greatest of the countries of Europe, land of religion and of art; alike of imperial organisation and of Mazzini;—mother of ideas, of culture, and of freedom!'

"One day it was Sivaji and the Mahrattas and the year's wanderings as a Sannyâsi, that won him home to Raigarh. 'And to this day,' said the Swami, 'authority in India dreads the Sannyâsi, lest he conceals beneath his yellow garb another Sivaji.'

"Often the enquiry, Who and what are the Aryans?—absorbed his attention; and, holding that their origin was complex, he would tell us how in Switzerland he had felt himself to be in China, so alike were the types. He believed too that the same was true of some parts of Norway. Then there were scraps of information about countries and physiognomies, an impassioned tale of the Hungarian scholar, who traced the Huns to Tibet, and lies buried in Darjeeling and so on. . . .

"Sometimes the Swami would deal with the rift between

Brâhmans and Kshattriyas, painting the whole history of India as a struggle between the two, and showing that the latter had always embodied the rising, fetter-destroying impulses of the nation. He could give excellent reason too for the faith that was in him that the Kayasthas of modern Bengal represented the pre-Mauryan Kshattriyas. He would portray the two opposing types of culture, the one classical, intensive, and saturated with an ever-deepening sense of tradition and custom; the other, defiant, impulsive, and liberal in its outlook. It was part of a deep-lying law of the historic development that Rama, Krishna, and Buddha had all arisen in the kingly, and not in the priestly caste. And in this paradoxical moment, Buddhism was reduced to a caste-smashing formula—'a religion invented by the Kshattriyas as a crushing rejoinder to Brâhmanism!

"That was a great hour indeed, when he spoke of Buddha; for, catching a word that seemed to identify him with its anti-Brâhmanical spirit, an uncomprehending listener said, 'Why, Swami, I did not know that you were a Buddhist!' 'Madam,' he said rounding on her, his whole face aglow with the inspiration of that name, 'I am the servant of the servants of the servants of Buddha. Who was there ever like Him?—the Lord—who never performed one action for Himself—with a heart that embraced the whole world! So full of pity that He—prince and monk—would give His life to save a little goat! So loving that He sacrificed Himself to the hunger of a tigress!—to the hospitality of a pariah and blessed him! And He came into my room when I was a boy and I fell at His feet! For I knew it was the Lord Himself!'

"Many times he spoke of Buddha in this fashion, sometimes at Belur and sometimes afterwards. And once he told us the story of Ambâpâli, the beautiful courtesan who feasted Him, in words that recalled the revolt of Rossetti's great half-sonnet of Mary Magdalene:—

'Oh loose me! Seest thou not my Bridegroom's face,
That draws me to Him? For His feet my kiss,
My hair, my tears, He craves today:—And oh!
What words can tell what other day and place
Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His?
He needs me, calls me, loves me, let me go!'

"But national feeling did not have it all its own way. For one morning when the chasm seemed to be widest, there was a long talk on Bhakti—that perfect identity with the Beloved that the devotion of Râya Râmânanda, the Bengali nobleman who was a contemporary of Chaitanya, so beautifully illustrates:

> 'Four eyes met. There were changes in two souls.
> And now I cannot remember whether he is a man
> And I a woman, or he a woman and I a man!
> All I know is, there were two, Love came, and there is one!'

"It was that same morning that he talked of the Babists of Persia,—in their era of martyrdom—of the woman who inspired and the man who worshipped and worked. And doubtless then he expatiated on that theory of his—somewhat quaint and surprising to unaccustomed minds, not so much for the matter of the statement, as for the explicitness of the expression,—of the greatness and goodness of the young, who can love without seeking personal expression for their love, and their high potentiality.

"Another day coming at sunrise when the snows could be seen, dawn-lighted, from the garden, it was Siva and Uma on whom he dwelt,—and that was Siva, up there, the white snow-peaks, and the light that fell upon Him was the Mother of the World! For a thought on which at this time he was dwelling much was that God *is* the Universe,—not within it, or outside it, and not the universe God or the image of God—but He it, and the All.

"Sometimes all through the summer he would sit for hours telling us stories, those cradle-tales of Hinduism, whose function is not at all that of our nursery fictions, but much more, like the man-making myths of the old Hellenic world. Best of all these I thought was the story of Suka, and we looked on the Siva-mountains and the bleak scenery of Almora the evening we heard it for the first time.

"Suka, the typical Paramahamsa, refused to be born for fifteen years, because he knew that his birth would mean his mother's death. Then his father appealed to Umâ, the Divine Mother. She was perpetually tearing down the veil of Mâyâ before the hidden Saint, and Vyâsa pleaded that She should cease this, or his son would never come to birth. Uma consented, for one moment only, and that moment the child was born. He came forth a young man sixteen years of age, unclothed, and went straight forward, knowing neither his father nor his mother, straight on, followed by Vyasa. Then, coming round a mountain-pass his body melted away from him, because it was no different from the universe, and his father following and crying, 'Oh my son! Oh my son!' was answered only by the echo, 'Om! Om! Om!'—among the rocks. Then Suka resumed his body, and came to his father to get knowledge from him. But Vyasa found that he had none for him, and sent him to Janaka, king of Mithilâ, the father of Sitâ, if perchance he might have some to give. Three days he sat outside the royal gates, unheeded, without a change of expression or of look. The fourth day he was suddenly admitted to the king's presence with *eclat*. Still there was no change.

"Then as a test, the powerful sage who was the king's prime minister translated himself into a beautiful woman, so beautiful that every one present had to turn away from the sight of her, and none dared speak. But Suka went up to her and drew her to sit beside him on his mat, while he talked to her of God.

"Then the minister turned to Janaka saying, 'Know, O King, if you seek the greatest man on earth, this is he!'

"There is little more told of the life of Suka. He is the ideal Paramahamsa. To him alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that One Undivided Ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer, taste of It. But he drank of the Sea of Bliss!'

"Suka was indeed the Swami's saint. He was the type, to him, of that highest realisation to which life and the world are merely play. Long after, we learned how Sri Ramakrishna had spoken of him in his boyhood as, 'My Suka.' And never can I forget the look, as of one gazing far into depths of joy, with which he once stood and quoted the words of Siva, in praise of the deep spiritual significance of the Bhagavad-Gitâ, and of the greatness of Suka—'I know (the real meaning of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gitâ), and Suka knows, and *perhaps* Vyâsa knows—a little!'

"Another day in Almora the Swami talked of the great humanising lives that had arisen in Bengal, at the long inrolling wash of the first wave of modern consciousness on the ancient shores of Hindu culture. Of Ram Mohun Roy we had already heard from him at Naini Tal. And now of the Pundit Vidyâsâgar he exclaimed, 'There is not a man of my age in Northern India, on whom his shadow has not fallen!' It was a great joy to him to remember that these men and Sri Ramakrishna had all been born within a few miles of each other.

"The Swami introduced Vidyâsâgar to us now as 'the hero of widow remarriage, and of the abolition of polygamy.' But his favourite story about him was of that day when he went home from the Legislative Council, pondering over the question of whether or not to adopt English dress on such occasions. Suddenly some one came up to a fat Mogul who was proceeding homewards in leisurely and pompous fashion, in front of him, with the news, 'Sir, your house is on fire!' The Mogul went neither faster nor slower for this information, and presently the messenger contrived to express a discreet astonishment, whereupon his master turned on him angrily. 'Wretch!' he said, 'Am I to abandon the gait of my ancestors, because a few sticks happen to be burning?' And Vidyâsâgar, walking behind, determined to stick to the chudder, dhoti and sandals, not even adopting coat and slippers.

"The picture of Vidyâsâgar going into retreat for a month for the study of the Sâstras, when his mother had suggested to him the remarriage of child-widows, was very forcible. 'He came out of his retirement of opinion that they were *not* against such remarriage, and he obtained the signatures of the Pundits that they agreed in this opinion. Then the action of certain native princes led the Pundits to abandon their own signatures, so that, had the Government not determined to assist the movement, it could not have been carried—'and now,' added the Swami, 'the difficulty has an economic rather than a social basis.'

"We could believe that a man who was able to discredit polygamy by moral force alone, was 'intensely spiritual.' And it was wonderful indeed to realise the Indian indifference to a formal creed, when we heard how this giant was driven by the famine of 1864,—when 140,000 people died of hunger and disease,—to have nothing more to do with God, and become entirely agnostic in thought.

"With this man, as one of the educators of Bengal, the Swami coupled the name of David Hare, the old Scotsman and atheist to whom the clergy of Calcutta refused Christian burial. He had died of nursing an old pupil through cholera. So his own boys carried his dead body and buried it in a swamp, and made the grave a place of pilgrimage. That place has now become College Square, the educational centre, and his school is now within the University. And to this day, Calcutta students make pilgrimage to the tomb.

"On this day we took advantage of the natural turn of the conversation to cross-question the Swami as to the possible influence that Christianity might have exerted over himself. He was much amused to hear that such a statement had been hazarded, and told us with much pride of his only contact with missionary influences, in the person of his old Scotch master, Mr. Hastie. This hot-headed old man lived on nothing, and regarded his room as his boys' home as much as his own. It was he who had first sent the Swami to Sri Ramakrishna, and towards the end of his stay in India he used to say, 'Yes, my boy, you were right, you were right!—It is true that all is God!' 'I am *proud* of him!'—cried the Swami, 'but I don't think you could say that he had Christianised me much!' It appeared, indeed, that he had only been his pupil for some six months, having attended college so irregularly that the Presidency College refused to send him up for his degree, though he undertook to pass.

"We heard charming stories, too, on less serious subjects. There was the lodging-house in an American city, for instance, where he had had to cook his own food, and where he would meet, in the course of operations, 'an actress who ate roast turkey everyday, and a husband and wife who lived by making ghosts.' And when the Swami remonstrated with the husband, and tried to persuade him to give up deceiving people, saying 'You *ought* not to do this!' the wife would come up behind, and say eagerly 'Yes Sir! That's just what I tell him; for *he* makes all the ghosts, and Mrs. Williams takes all the money!'

"He told us also of a young engineer, an educated man, who, at a spiritualistic gathering, when the fat Mrs. Williams appeared from behind the screen as his thin mother, exclaimed 'Mother dear, how you *have* grown in the spirit-world!'

" 'At this,' said the Swami, 'my heart broke, for I thought there could be no hope for the man.' But never at a loss, he told the story of a Russian painter, who was ordered to paint the picture of a peasant's dead father, the only description given being, 'Man! Don't I tell you he had a wart on his nose?' When at last, therefore, the painter had made a portrait of some stray peasant, and affixed a large wart to the nose, the picture was declared to be ready, and the son was told to come and see it. He stood in front of it, greatly overcome, and said, 'Father! Father! How changed you are since I saw you last!' After this, the young engineer would never speak to the Swami again, which showed at least that he could see the point of a story. But at this, the Hindu monk was genuinely astonished. . . .

"June 9th. This Thursday morning there was a talk on Krishna. It was characteristic of the Swami's mind, and characteristic also of the Hindu culture from which he had sprung, that he could lend himself to the enjoyment and portrayal of an idea one day, that the next would see submitted to a pitiless analysis and left slain upon the field. He was a sharer to the full in the belief of his people that, provided an idea was spiritually true and consistent, it mattered very little about its objective actuality. And this mode of thought had first been suggested to him, in his boyhood, by his own Master. He had mentioned some doubt as to the authenticity of a certain religious history. 'What!' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'do you not then think those who could conceive such ideas must have been the thing itself?'

"The existence of Krishna, then, like that of Christ, he often told us, 'in the general way' he doubted. Buddha and Mohammed alone, amongst religious teachers, had been fortunate enough to have 'enemies as well as friends,' so that their historical careers were beyond dispute. As for Krishna, he was the most shadowy of all. 'A poet, a cowherd, a great ruler, a warrior, and a sage had all perhaps been merged in one beautiful figure, holding the Gitâ in his hand.'

"But today, Krishna was 'the most perfect of the Avatârs.' And a wonderful picture followed, of the charioteer who reined in his horses, while he surveyed the field of battle and in one brief glance noted the disposition of the forces, at the same moment that he commenced to utter to his royal pupil the deep spiritual truths of the Gitâ.

" . . . And the Swami was fond of a statement, ... that the Krishna-worshippers of India had exhausted the possibilities of the romantic motive in lyric poetry.

"June 10th. It was our last afternoon at Almora that we heard the story of the fatal illness of Sri Ramakrishna. Dr. Mohendra Lall Sirkar had been called in, and had pronounced the disease to be cancer of the throat, leaving the young disciples with many warnings as to its infectious nature. Half an hour later, 'Naren,' as he then was, came in and found them huddled together, discussing the dangers of the case. He listened to what they had been told, and then, looking down, saw at his feet the cup of gruel that had been partly taken by Sri Ramakrishna and which must have contained in it, the germs of the fatal discharges of mucus and *pus*, as it came out in his baffled attempts to swallow the thing, on account of the stricture of the food-passage in the throat. He picked it up, and drank from it, before them all. Never was the infection of cancer mentioned amongst the disciples again."

While at Almora the Swami met numerous residents of the place and distinguished persons from other parts of India, who had come up there to spend the summer months, and them all he instructed in the Dharma. During this time also, he met Mrs. Annie Besant, twice; she was then the guest of Mr. G. N. Chakravarti. The first meeting took place at the house of the latter whose wife invited the Swami, who was known to her from the days of her girlhood. Shortly after, Mrs. Besant was invited to tea in his host's house to meet the Swami, and with her, on both the occasions, he had long and pleasant conversations.

Though full of fun at times, the Swami often spoke of the torture of life, and would enter into moods of meditation. A strange longing for quiet obsessed him and on Wednesday, May 25, he left the circle of friends and disciples and retired to Siyâdevi, some distance from Almora. There he was in the silence of the forests for ten hours each day, but he found on returning to his tent in the evenings that crowds followed him even there, so he returned on Saturday. But he was radiant, for he had proved to himself that he could be again "the old-time Sannyâsin, able to go barefoot, and endure heat, cold, and scanty fare, unspoilt by the West." On the following Monday, May 30, the Swami accompanied by his host and hostess left Almora for a week, partly in search of seclusion, and partly on business, in connection with a possible purchase of an estate for his monastery, which however, fell through.

When he returned on Sunday evening, June 5, it was to receive two terrible shocks,—the news of the death of Pavhari Baba, whom he loved, as he had said once, "second only to Sri Ramakrishna," and the death of his dear disciple, Mr. Goodwin. Mr. Goodwin, who was last heard of with Miss Muller in

Almora, had gone to Madras, where he had accepted an offer to join the staff of the *Madras Mail*. He died on June 2, at Ootacamund, of enteric fever. The sad news was not broken to him till the next morning, when he came early to Mrs. Bull's Bungalow. He took his loss calmly, sat down and chatted quietly with his Western disciples. That morning he was full of Bhakti passing through asceticism far out of the reach of the sweet snares of personality.

> " 'What is this idea of Bhakti without renunciation?' he said. 'It is most pernicious!' And standing there for an hour or more, he talked of the awful self-discipline that one must impose on oneself, if one would indeed be unattached, of the requisite nakedness of selfish motives, and of the danger that at any moment the most flowerlike soul might have its petals soiled with the grosser stains of life. He told the story of an Indian nun who was asked when a man could be certain of safety on this road, and who sent back, for answer, a little plate of ashes. For the fight against passion was long and fierce, and at any moment the conqueror might become the conquered.
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> "And as he talked, it seemed that this banner of renunciation was the flag of a great victory, that poverty and self-mastery were the only fit raiment for the soul that would wed the Eternal Bridegroom, and that life was a long opportunity for giving, and the thing not taken away from us was to be mourned as lost. . . ."

But the Swami's tender heart was sorely afflicted by the loss of a loving disciple who had served him so many years with the warmest devotion. As hours passed by, he "complained of the weakness that brought the image of his most faithful disciple constantly to his mind. It was no more manly, he protested, to be thus ridden by one's memory, than to retain the characteristics of the fish or the dog. Man must conquer this illusion, and know that the dead are here beside us and with us, as much as ever. It is their absence and separation that are a myth. And then he would break out again with some bitter utterance against the folly of imagining Personal Will to guide the universe. 'As if,' he exclaimed, 'it would not be one's right and duty to fight such a God and slay Him, for killing Goodwin!—And Goodwin, if he had lived, could have done so much!' And in India one was free to recognise this as the most religious, because the most unflinchingly truthful, mood of all!"

He took away a few faulty lines of someone's writing and brought back a beautiful little poem, "*Requiescat in Pace,*" in which nothing of the original was left. This was sent to the widowed mother, as his memorial of her son. And of him he also wrote:

> "The debt of gratitude I owe him can never be repaid, and those who think they have been helped by any thought of mine, ought to know that almost every word of it was published through the untiring and most unselfish exertions of Mr. Goodwin. In him I have lost a friend true as steel, a disciple of never-failing devotion, a worker who knew not what tiring was, and the world is less rich by one of those few who are born, as it were, to live only for others."

The Swami grew restless and impatient and yearned to be away and alone. He could no longer bear to remain in that place where the news of his great sorrow had reached him, where letters had to be written and received constantly, keeping his wound open. It was decided to spend some time in Kashmir. Therefore on June 11, he with only the women disciples who had accompanied him from Calcutta left Almora for Kashmir, as guests of Mrs. Ole Bull.

Before describing his travels in the immediate future, a fact of supreme import both to the Swami himself and to his mission must be mentioned. While in Almora he had arranged with Mr. and Mrs.

Sevier and Swami Swarupananda to revive the defunct magazine, *Prabuddha Bharata,* the editor of which, B. R. Rajam Iyer, a gifted young man of twenty-six, a real Vedântin and an ardent admirer of the Swami, had just passed away. The Swami had always a special affection for this paper financed and managed by his Madrasi disciples. Coming up to Almora, as also many a time before, he had spoken of his intention to start papers in English and in the vernaculars to be conducted by his brother-monks and disciples, as he felt more and more their need and value,—in common with public preaching, monastic centres and Homes of Service,—in giving Modern India his Master's gospel as well as his own message. He had even once thought of bringing out a daily paper. However, he left for Kashmir with the satisfaction of knowing that the *Prabuddha Bharata* or "Awakened India" was to be transferred to Almora, as soon as the necessary arrangements were completed, with Swami Swarupananda as editor and Mr. Sevier as manager. The latter also came forward with an offer to meet all preliminary costs of purchasing and of bringing up the hand-press, type, paper and other necessary materials. Reaching Srinagar the Swami eagerly awaited the appearance of the first number of the magazine. And he sent an inspiring poem of invocation, "To the Awakened India," charging it to wake up once more and resume its march "for working wonders new," "till Truth, bare Truth in all its glory shines!"

Before taking the formal leave of the various activities of the Swami at Almora it will be interesting to give the reminiscences of an interview he had with Aswini Kumar Datta, the saintly patriot of Bengal.

It was some time in May or June in 1897. The Swami was staying at Almora with Capt. and Mrs. Sevier as their guest. Aswini Babu also came to that town in the course of travel. He learned one day from his cook of the presence of a strange Bengali Sadhu in the town, who spoke English, rode horses and moved altogether in a lordly style. He had learnt from the papers that the Swami was then staying at Almora, and therefore had no difficulty in identifying the strange Sâdhu as the warrior-monk Vivekananda. Aswini Babu went out to meet the "Hindu Warrior." Nobody could give him the address of "Swami Vivekananda." But when he enquired about the "Bengali Sâdhu," a passer-by said, "You mean the riding Sâdhu? There he is coming on horseback! That is his house, sir." Aswini Babu saw from a distance that as soon as the ochre-robed Sannyâsin reached the bungalow-gate, an Englishman came and led the horse to the door, where the Swami dismounted and went in.

A while after, Aswini Babu went in and enquired at the door, "Is Naren Datta here?" A young monk answered in disgust, "No sir, there is no Naren Datta here. He died long ago. There is only Swami Vivekananda." But Aswini Babu said he did not want Swami Vivekananda, but Paramahamsa Dev's Narendra. This conversation reached the Swami's ears, and he sent for the disciple and enquired what the matter was. The young monk said, "A gentleman is enquiring about Naren Datta,—Paramahamsa's Narendra. I told him that he had died long ago, but he might see Swami Vivekananda." The Swami exclaimed, "Oh what have you done! Just show him in." Aswini Babu was accordingly called in and found the Swami seated on an easy chair. On seeing Aswini Babu, the Swami stood up and greeted him cordially. Aswini Babu said, "The Master had once asked me to speak to his dear Narendra. But Narendra could not speak with me much on that occasion. Fourteen years have passed by, I meet him again. The Master's words cannot be in vain." The Swami sincerely regretted not having been able to have a long talk with him on the first occasion. This astonished Aswini Babu, for he had scarcely expected that the Swami would remember him and a few minutes' conversation held so long ago. The Swami's memory astounded him.

When Aswini Babu addressed him as "Swamiji," he interrupted him, saying, "How is that? When did I become a 'Swami' to you? I am still the same Narendra. The name by which I used to be called by the Master is to me a priceless treasure. Call me by that name."

Aswini Babu: "You have travelled over the world and inspired millions of hearts with spirituality. Can you tell me which way lies India's salvation?"

Swamiji: "I have nothing more to tell you than what you heard from the Master,—that religion is the very essence of our being, and all reforms must come through it to be acceptable to the masses. To do otherwise is as improbable as pushing the Ganges back to its source in the Himalayas and making it flow in a new channel."

A: "But have you no faith in what Congress is doing?"

S: "No, I have not.[1] But, of course, something is better than nothing, and it is good to push the sleeping nation from all sides to wake it up. Can you tell me what Congress has been doing for the masses? Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring you freedom? I have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first. Let them have full means, and they will work out their own salvation. If Congress does anything for them, it has my sympathy. The virtues of Englishmen should also be assimilated."

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[1] The Swami here speaks of the Congress of those days, which hardly had any touch with the masses, being confined to the educated few.

A: "Is it any particular creed you mean by 'religion'?"

S: "Did the Master preach any particular creed? But he has spoken of the Vedânta as an all-comprehensive and synthetic religion. I also therefore preach it. But the essence of my religion is strength. The religion that does not infuse strength into the heart, is no religion to me, be it of the Upanishads, the Gita or the Bhâgavatam. Strength is religion, and nothing is greater than strength."

A: "Please tell me what I should do."

S: "I understand you are engaged in some educational work. That is real work. A great power is working in you, and the gift of knowledge is a great one. But see that a man-making education spreads among the masses. The next thing is the building up of character. Make your students' character as strong as the thunderbolt. Of the bones of the Bengali youths shall be made the thunderbolt that shall destroy India's thraldom. Can you give me a few fit boys? A nice shake I can give to the world then.

"And wherever you hear the Râdhâ-Krishna songs going on, use the whip right and left. The whole nation is going to rack and ruin! People having no self-control indulging in such songs! Even the slightest impurity is a great hindrance to the conception of these high ideals. Is it a joke? We have long sung and danced,—no harm if there is a lull for a time. In the meanwhile let the country wax strong.

"And go to the untouchables, the cobblers, the sweepers and others of their kind, and tell them, 'You are the soul of the nation, and in you lies infinite energy which can revolutionise the world. Stand up, shake off your shackles, and the whole world shall wonder at you.' Go and found schools among them, and invest them with the 'sacred thread.'"

It being the Swami's breakfast hour, Aswini Babu rose to take leave. But before going, he asked the Swami, "Is it true that when the Madras Brâhmins called you a Sudra having no right to preach the Vedas, you said, 'If I am a Sudra, ye the Brâhmins of Madras are the Pariah of the Pariahs?'"

S: "Yes."

A: "Was it becoming of you, a religious teacher and a man of self-control, to retort like that?"

S: "Who says so? I never said I was right. The impudence of these people made me lose my temper, and the words came out. What could I do? But I do not justify them."

At this, Aswini Babu embraced the Swami and said, "Today you rise higher than ever in my estimation. Now I realise why you are a world-conqueror and why the Master loved you so much!"

XXXII

IN KASHMIR: AMARNATH AND KSHIRBHAVANI

The journey from Almora down to the plains through the hills covered with almost tropical forests was delightful. On the way the Swami pointed out a certain hill-side inhabited, so legend holds, by a race of centaurs and he told of his own experience of once having actually seen such a phantom there before hearing the folk-tale. On June 12, the party rested above the beautiful lake, Bhim Tal. In his talks in the afternoon with his companions, the Swami translated some of the most charming Vedic verses, and songs of Soordâs and other poet-devotees, in his intense and poetic way intoning every line in the original before giving its English form. The Rudra-prayer was thus rendered by him:

"From the unreal lead us to the Real.
From darkness lead us unto Light.
From death lead us to Immortality.
Reach us through and through our self.
And evermore protect us—Oh Thou Terrible!—
From ignorance, by Thy sweet compassionate Face."

And then the psalm of invocation of peace and benediction:

"The blissful winds are sweet to us.
The seas are showering bliss on us.
May the corn in our fields bring bliss to us.
May the plants and herbs bring bliss to us.
May the cattle give us bliss.
O Father in Heaven, be Thou blissful unto us!
The very dust of the earth is full of bliss.
It is all bliss—all bliss—all bliss."

The next day the Pine and Deodar forests and the hills were left behind for the Punjab.

On reaching Rawalpindi, the party drove by Tongâ to Murree, where they stayed for three days, and thence, partly by Tonga and partly by boat, they made their way to Srinagar, arriving there June 22. On the way, from Kohala to Baramulla, the Swami, in the course of his instructions to his companions, spoke frankly of the modern abuses of Hinduism, and uncompromisingly denounced the evil practices known as Vâmâchâra, prevalent in the name of religion, in the land. This is mentioned because it reveals that the Swami could see the faults as well as the virtues of his motherland, and that he kept nothing back from his Western disciples in his instructions concerning India telling them the worst things that might be said against his people and their creeds as well as the best. And he could denounce when denunciation was imperative.

On June 19, passing through the valley of the Jhelum, the Swami was in a reminiscent mood. Speaking of Brahmavidyâ, the path of realisation of the One Absolute, and of how love conquers all evil, he related the story of one of his class-mates, who subsequently became a rich man. He was suffering from an obscure disease which baffled the skill of the doctors. Naturally, he lost hope of recovery and interest in life in general, and turned to religion and thoughts of Vairâgyam, as men do in such a case. Hearing that the Swami had become a religious man and an adept in Yoga he sent for him, begging him to come if only for once, which he did. As the Swami sat at his bedside, there came to him the Upanishadic Sloka—"Him the Brâhmana conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the Brâhmana. Him the Kshattriya conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the Kshattriya and him the universe conquers, who thinks that he is separate from the universe." Curiously, this acted like a charm on the sick man and the effect was miraculous. He grasped the theme even with the repeating of the Sloka, felt strength in the body as he had not done for a long time, and made a quick recovery! "And so," said the Swami, "though I often say strange things and angry things, yet remember that in my heart I never seriously mean to preach anything but love! All these things will come right, if only we realise that we love each other."

The readers will remember the fascination the Great God Siva had for the Swami during his childhood. As he grew older his love for Siva deepened and now being in the Himalayas, the abode of the Lord of monks and Yogis, the thought of Him was uppermost in his mind. To his disciples he would speak of the Paurânic conception of the oneness of Siva and His consort, Umâ, under the guise of half-man and half-woman, representing the junction of two great streams of thought, Monasticism and Mother-worship, or the vision of truth inseparable from renunciation and love supreme. And "he understood, he said, for the first time this summer, the meaning of the nature-story that made the Ganges fall on the head of the Great God, and wander in and out amongst His matted locks, before she found an outlet on the plains below. He had searched long, he said, for the words that the rivers and waterfalls uttered, amongst the mountains, before he had realised that it was the eternal cry 'Byom! Byom! Hara! Hara!' 'Yes!' he said of Siva one day, 'He is the Great God, calm, beautiful, and silent! and I am His great worshipper.'"

At Baramulla, and as the party entered further into Kashmir, the Swami's mind was filled with the legends with which the Kashmiris have peopled the cathedral rocks, the many ruins and the winding passes. From a scenic point of view alone, the journey was intensely fascinating. Groups of singing peasants, or pious pilgrims and monks wending their way on foot through tortuous paths to the sacred shrines, the Irises in bloom on every hill-side, the green fields, the beautiful valleys ringed round with snow-clad mountains, and the poplars in the neighbourhood of Islamabad and the immense Chennaar trees to be seen everywhere, were in themselves pictures never to be forgotten.

No matter where he travelled, whether it was in the East or in the West, the Swami tried to identify himself with the habits of the people. So here in Kashmir one sees him drinking Kashmiri tea from a *samovar* and eating the jam of the country after the fashion of the people.

As the Swami had brought no attendants with him, he had to look after every little detail himself and to make all the necessary arrangements on the way for the comfort of the party, and these offices he performed with the keenest pleasure. Arriving at Baramulla on the twentieth, the party started in three Dungâs, or house-boats, at about four o'clock in the afternoon for Srinagar, which they reached on the third day. On the next day of their trip far up the river Jhelum, when the boats were moored near a village, the Swami took his companions out for a long walk across the fields and turned into a neighbouring farm-yard with a view to introduce them to a woman, of whose faith and pride he had spoken not only to themselves and others in private talks but even in one of his speeches in Calcutta a few months before. In that farm-yard they found seated under a tree a handsome elderly woman spinning wool, while round her, helping her, were her two daughters-in-law and their children. The Swami had called at this farm last year to beg for a glass of water, and after drinking had asked her in a mild tone, "And what religion is yours, mother?" "Thank God, sir," the woman had said with triumph in her voice, "by the mercy of the Lord, I am a Mussulman!" The Swami was on the present occasion warmly welcomed by the whole family and every courtesy was shown to his friends.

In one of these walks Sister Nivedita complained to the Swami of the abandonment of feeling which she had seen in Kalighat. "Why do they kiss the ground before the image?" she asked. The Swami became very quiet and then said, "Is it not the same thing to kiss the ground before that image as to kiss the ground before these mountains?"

The entire time spent in the Dungâs on the river Jhelum in and about Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir, (from June 21 to July 25), was an unparalleled educational opportunity for the Swami's companions. Many excursions were made; and many were the discussions in which the Swami became so interested that he would sometimes forget all thought of food. The topics were extremely varied. Sometimes the subject would be the different religious periods through which Kashmir had passed, especially the period under Kanishka; again the morality of Buddhism and the religious imperialism of Asoka, or the history of Siva-worship. One day he spoke of the conquests of Chenghis Khan, of whom he said, "He was not a vulgar aggressor," and compared him with Napoleon and Alexander, saying that he, like the other two "was inspired with the thought of unity,—he wanted to unify his world." And he went on to say that those three were perhaps one soul, "manifesting itself in three different conquests," in the same way that one Soul might have come again and again as Krishna, Buddha and Christ to bring about the unity of man in God in the world of religious realities. Often the talk would be on the Gita, "that wonderful poem, without one note in it of weakness or unmanliness."

He had been in Kashmir scarcely a week when the desire for solitude swept over him and he would break away from the little company to roam about alone,—returning later radiant from his contact with the Source of all Knowledge. After such an experience he would reiterate, "It is a sin even to *think* of the body;" "It is wrong to *manifest* power!" Or again, "Things do not grow better. They remain as they were. It is *we* who grow better, by the changes we make in ourselves." He constantly interpreted human life as an expression of God. Social life seemed to be agony to him, so antagonistic was it to the old-time idea of the quiet and self-effacement of the monk. Speaking of these days the Sister Nivedita writes:

> "The life of the silent ashen-clad wanderer, or the hidden hermit, he thought of, it would now and then seem, as the lover might think of the beloved. At no time would it have surprised us, had someone told us that today or tomorrow he would be gone for ever, that we were now listening to his voice for the last time. He, and necessarily we, in all that depended on him, were as straws carried on the Ganges of the Eternal Will. At any moment It might reveal Itself to him as Silence. At any moment life in the world might end for him.
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> "This plan-less-ness was not an accident. Never can I forget the disgust with which he turned on myself once, a couple of years later, when I had offered him some piece of worldly wisdom regarding his own answer to a letter which he had brought for me to see. 'Plans! Plans!' he exclaimed in indignation. 'That is why you Western people can never create a religion! If any of you ever did, it was only a few Catholic

saints, who had no plans. Religion was never, never preached by planners!' "

It can be readily understood that, living in the shadow of that great life fired with a burning passion for the highest, it became evident to the Western pilgrims that his plan-less-ness was the result of knowledge, and that solitude and silence was the greatest medium of self-development.

"Nothing," said the Swami, "better illustrated to his own mind, the difference between Eastern and Western methods of thought, than the European idea that a man could not live alone for twenty years and remain quite sane, taken side by side with the Indian notion that till a man had been alone for twenty years, he could not be regarded as perfectly himself."

Among the small excursions made at this time in the company of his disciples was the one to the temple of Takt-i-Suleiman, situated on the summit of a small mountain two to three thousand feet high. Beholding the beautiful and the extensive scenery of the place the Swami exclaimed, "Look! What genius the Hindu shows in placing his temples! He always chooses a grand scenic effect! See! The Takt commands the whole of Kashmir. The rock of Hari Parvat rises red out of blue water, like a lion couchant, crowned. And the temple of Mârttanda has the valley at its feet!" Then he launched into a long discourse on the innate love of nature in the Hindu character, which showed itself in its choice of sites of peculiar beauty and importance for building temples, hermitages and monuments.

Always given to merriment, the Swami postponed a contemplated journey to organise for his American friends a surprise celebration of the Fourth of July, their national festival. Taking the one non-American member of the party into his confidence, he went out late on the afternoon of the third and brought a Brâhman tailor in great excitement, asking her to explain to the man how to make a replica of the American flag. The stars and stripes were very crudely represented on the piece of cotton that was nailed, with branches of evergreens, to the head of the dining-room-boat, where an early tea was arranged for. As his own special contribution to the event, he wrote a poem which was read aloud by way of greeting, entitled "To the Fourth of July," a passionate utterance of his own longing for the Final Freedom in the Infinite. Time proved it to have been penned in a prophetic vein, for four years later to that very day, his shackles of work broken, he entered in "springing joy" into that Final Freedom concerning which he had written.

On the journey back to Srinagar the Swami was full of the ideal of renunciation, and carried away by his mood he spoke with uncompromising scorn against those who sought to glorify the worldly life. "Is it so easy," he explained, "to be a Janaka? To sit on a throne absolutely unattached? Caring nothing for wealth or fame, for wife or child? One after another in the West has told me that he had reached this. To them I could only say—'Such great men are not born in India!'" On the other hand he said, "Never forget to say to yourself, and to teach to your children,—'As is the difference between a fire-fly and the blazing sun, between the infinite ocean and a little pond, between a mustard-seed and the mountain of Meru, such is the difference between the householder and the Sannyâsin!'" He would bless, he said, even the fraudulent Sâdhus and those who failed to keep to their vows, "inasmuch as they also have witnessed to the ideal, and so are in some degree the cause of the success of others!" Had it not been for the Geruâ, the emblem of monasticism, he pointed out, luxury and worldliness would have robbed man of all his manliness.

A desire for quiet and peace seemed to grow more and more upon the Swami in these days, and the absence of two of his American disciples on a short visit to Gulmarg he took to be a fit opportunity to carry out his design. Without revealing his plans he made preparations for a pilgrimage to the famous Siva shrine of Amarnâth by way of Sonamârg, and left on July 10, penniless and alone. On the fifteenth he returned, as he found the route was impracticable because of the summer heat which had melted some of the glaciers.

The next day, or the day after, in speaking of Bhakti, of Siva and Uma, and of Radha and Krishna, he became so absorbed that he paid no heed to repeated calls for breakfast. He responded at last reluctantly, saying, "When one has all this Bhakti what does one want with food?"

On the eighteenth the whole party drifted down to Islamabad. On the afternoon of the next day they sought out and found the quaint old Temple of Pandrenthan, sunken in a scum-covered pond within a wood by the side of the Jhelum. Inside the temple the Swami introduced his companions to the study of Indian archæology and taught them to observe the decorations in the interior with their sun-medallion and beautiful sculpture, in low relief, of male and female figures intertwined with serpents. Among the outside carvings was a fine image of Buddha, standing, with his hands uplifted, in one of the trefoil arches of the eastern door, and a much defaced frieze of a seated woman, with a tree,—evidently Mâyâ Devi, Buddha's mother. The temple was built of heavy grey limestone and dated perhaps from Kanishka's time, 150 A.D. To the Swami, writes Sister Nivedita:

> "The place was delightfully suggestive. It was a direct memorial of Buddhism, representing one of the four religious periods into which he had already divided the History of Kashmir: 1. Tree and Snake-worship, from which dated all the names of the springs ending in Nâg, as Vêrnâg, and so on; 2. Buddhism; 3. Hinduism, in the form of Sun-worship; and 4. Mohammedanism. Sculpture, he told us, was the characteristic art of Buddhism, and the sun-medallion, or lotus, one of its commonest ornaments. The figures with the serpents referred to pre-Buddhism. . . ."

It was sunset when the party returned to their boats. The presence in the wood of that silent chapel and of Buddha must have moved the Swami deeply, for on that evening his mind overflowed with historical comparisons. He spoke, for instance, of the points of similarity between the Vedic and the Roman Catholic ritual, holding the latter to have been derived from the former through Buddhism which was only an offshoot of Hinduism. "Vedic ritual," he pointed out, "has its Mass, the offering of food to God, your Blessed Sacrament, our Prasâd. Only it is offered sitting, not kneeling, as is common in hot countries. They kneel in Thibet. Then, too, Vedic ritual has its lights, incense, music." When it was suggested that Hinduism had no Common Prayer, he flashed out at his opponent,—"No! and neither had Christianity! That is pure Protestantism and Protestantism took it from the Mohammedans perhaps through Moorish influence? Mohammedanism is the only religion that has completely broken down the idea of the priest. The leader of prayer stands with his back to the people, and only the reading of the Koran may take place from the pulpit. Protestantism is an approach to this."

"Even the tonsure," he continued, "existed in India, in the shaven head. . . . The monk and nun both existed in pre-Buddhistic Hinduism. Europe gets her orders from the Thebaid."

Almost the whole of Christianity, he believed, was Aryan,—Indian and Egyptian ideas tinctured with Judaism and Hellenism. Of the historicity of Jesus, he said, he had doubted in a way since his significant dream off Crete. However,—"Two things stand out as personal living touches in the life of Christ,—the woman taken in adultery,—the most beautiful story in literature,—and the woman at the well. How strangely true is this last, to Indian life! A woman, coming to draw water, finds, seated at the well-side, a yellow-clad monk. He asks her for water. Then he teaches her, and does a little mind-reading and so on. But in India when she went to call the villagers, the monk would have taken his chance, and fled to the forest!"

Of the prominent figures of Christianity he remarked that only of Saint Paul could history be sure, "and he was not an eye-witness, and according to his own showing was capable of Jesuitry—'by all means save souls'—isn't it?" He preferred Strauss to Renan, whose "Life of Jesus is mere froth," and felt also that the Acts and Epistles were older than the Gospels. Saint Paul's greatness lay in that he had galvanised into life an obscure Nazarene sect of great antiquity, which "furnished the mythic personality as a centre of worship." But at the bottom was the great Rabbi Hillel, who was responsible for the teachings of Jesus. "The Resurrection," he said, "was, of course, simply spring cremation. Only the rich Greeks and Romans had had cremation anyway, and the new sun-myth would only stop it amongst the few."

Of Buddha, the Swami thought that he was the greatest man that had ever lived. "He never drew a breath for himself," he exclaimed. "Above all, he never claimed worship. He said, 'Buddha is not a man, but a state. I have found the door. Enter, all of you!' "

Drifting down the river, and enjoying the lovely scenery around, the party came the next day to the ruins of the two great temples of Avantipur, and on the twenty-second went on to Islamabad after visiting the temple of Bijbehâra. The Swami took long walks in the morning with one or more of his pupils, across the fields and along the banks of the Jhelum. And his talks during these walks were as exhilarating as the mountain breeze that blew upon them, and as soul-enthralling as the blossoms on the fruit trees all about.

Discoursing on the sense of sin as current among the Egyptian, Semitic and Aryan races, he pointed out that though it appears in the Vedas it quickly disappears, while the Egyptians and Semites cling to it as one of the main planks of their religious ideas. The Devil, according to the Vedic conception, is Lord of Anger, with the Buddhists he is Mâra, the Lord of Lust. "But while Satan is the Hamlet of the Bible, in the Hindu scriptures the Lord of Anger never divides Creation. He always represents defilement, never duality. With Zoroaster, who was a reformer of some old religion which must have been Vedântic, Ormuzd and Ahriman were not supreme, they were only manifestations of the Supreme. In India, Righteousness and Sin—Vidyâ and Avidyâ—have both to be transcended to reach the highest truth."

The talk would often drift to matters pertaining to his motherland and the future. "In order to strengthen the national life," he said, "we must reinforce the current of that life itself along the line of its own culture and ideals. For instance, Buddha preached renunciation and India listened. Yet within a thousand years, she had reached her highest point of national prosperity. The national life in India has renunciation as its source. Its highest ideals are service and Mukti."

"No nation, not Greek or another, has ever carried patriotism so far as the Japanese. They don't talk, they act —give up all for country. There are noblemen now living in Japan who gave up their political privileges and powers to create the unity of the empire. And not one traitor could be found in the Japanese war. Think of that!"

"The Sannyâsin who thinks of gold, to desire it, commits suicide."

"With the Hindus, marriage is not for individual happiness, but for the welfare of the nation and the caste."

"You are so morbid, you Westerners! You worship Sorrow! All through your country I found that. Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface: really, it is full of tragic intensity. Here, it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment."

"A leader is not made in one life. He has to be born for it. For the difficulty is not in organisation and making plans ; the test, the real test, of a leader lies in holding widely different people together, along the line of their common sympathies. And this can only be done unconsciously, never by trying."

But there was another side. The Swami was not the philosopher or the teacher all the time. He could be gay as well as grave, full of fun, jokes and humorous stories,—a phenomenon which shocked the feelings of the divines and ecclesiastics when he was in the West. Some had even told him to his face, "Swami, you are a religious preacher. You should not give yourself up to laughter and frivolity like common folk. Such conduct does not befit you." But his reply was, "We are children of Bliss and Light! Why should we be sombre and morose?"

Once at Islamabad, as the group sat round him on the grass in an apple orchard, during the evening hours, he was "engaged in the rarest of rare happenings"—a talk of a personal character. Picking up two pebbles in his hand he said, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*"—and the stones struck one another in his hand—"for I *have* touched the feet of God!" Then he went on to tell them some remarkable episodes of his Parivrâjaka life. The talk came to an end abruptly, when a child with a badly cut hand was brought to him by the villagers. He himself bathed the wound with water and applied the ashes of a piece of calico to stop the bleeding.

Next morning, the twenty-third, the entire party visited the ruins of Marttanda, where they noted that the rest-house round the Temple was strangely Gothic in shape.

On the twenty-fifth they journeyed on to Acchabal, over a road of exquisite beauty. It was at Acchabal that the Swami during an open-air meal suddenly announced to his companions his intention to go to Amarnath, in company with the two or three thousand pilgrims then *en route* for the Shrine. As a special privilege Sister Nivedita was allowed to join him on the pilgrimage, so that she, as a future worker, might have a direct knowledge and insight into that time-honoured religious institution of his country. It was settled later, that his other European disciples would accompany the party as far as Pahlgam and there await the Swami's return. Accordingly, returning to the boats, the start was made next afternoon, July 26, for Bawan, the first stopping-place on the way to the sacred shrine of Amarnath.

The pilgrimage of thousands of devotees to the far-away Cave of Amarnath, nestled in a glacial gorge of the Western Himalayas, through some of the most charming scenery in the world, is fascinating in the extreme. One is struck with wonder at the quiet and orderly way in which a canvas town springs up with incredible rapidity at every halting-place, with its tents of various colours and of all shapes and sizes, with its Bazaars, and broad streets running through the middle, and all vanishing as quickly at the break of dawn when the whole army of gay pilgrims set out on the march again. The glow of countless cooking-fires, the ashen-smeared Sâdhus under the canopy of their large Geruâ umbrellas stuck in the ground, sitting and discussing or meditating before their Dhunis, the Sannyâsins of all orders in their various garbs, the men and women with children, from all parts of the country in their characteristic costumes, and their devout faces, the torches shimmering at nightfall, the blowing of conch-shells and horns, the singing of hymns and prayers in chorus,—all these are most impressive, and convey to some extent an idea of the overmastering passion of the race for religion.

Taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the Swami in common with his fellow-disciples, had learnt to observe scrupulously all those customs and rules of conduct which had become consecrated during the ages, by the faith of millions. Thus while presiding over a Pujâ, or religious service, or over the initiation of a disciple into Sannyâs, he would see to it that all the necessary materials and accessories were correct in their minutest details and made ready in a proper way, and that the ceremony and chanting of Mantras and so on were conducted strictly in accordance with Vedic injunctions. While on pilgrimage he would do everything in the same devout way as the most simple-minded woman about him. He would bathe in the holy waters, offer flowers, fruits and sweets to the object of worship before breaking his fast, make obeisance prostrating himself on the ground, tell his beads, make Pradakshinâ and the like. The Swami, as befits one whose methods were always constructive and respectful of the varying stages and tendencies of those who came to him for guidance, as well as the vast number of pilgrims all about, made himself one with everyone in these ceremonials and rites. And so we see him imbued with the spirit of the pilgrimage, practising austerities with devotion and ardour, eating one meal a day cooked in the orthodox fashion, seeking solitude and silence as far as was possible, telling his beads and devoting much time to meditation in his tent.

On the hundreds of monks the Swami's influence was tremendous, though at first he encountered strong opposition from the more orthodox of them, because of the presence of his foreign disciples. When their tents were pitched too near the pilgrims' camp, the Sâdhus raised a clamour demanding them to be removed further. The Swami treated their complaints with scorn, till a Nâgâ Sâdhu came up to him and said meekly, "Swamiji, you *have* the power, but you ought not to manifest it!" The Swami understood, and had the tents removed at once. Curiously enough, from the next day they all made way for him, and his tent as well as that of Sister Nivedita were placed at the head of the camp, in some commanding position. And throughout the rest of the journey, at every resting-place, the Swami's tent was besieged by scores of monks seeking knowledge from him. Many of them could not understand his broad liberal views on religious subjects and his warmth of love and sympathy for Islam. The Mohammedan Tahsildar, the state-official in charge of the whole pilgrimage, and his subordinates were so attracted to the Swami that they attended his talks daily, and afterwards entreated him to initiate them. Sister Nivedita also, by her amiable manners, soon became a general favourite with the pilgrims and received from them "endless touching little kindnesses."

Passing Bawan, noted for its holy springs, and Eismukkam, the Swami and the host of pilgrims reached Pahlgam, the village of the shepherds, and encamped at the foot of an arrow-shaped ravine beside the roaring torrent of the Lidar. Here they made a halt for a day to observe the Ekâdasi fast. Near Chandanawara, the next stage, the Swami insisted that his disciple climb her first glacier of a height of several thousand feet on foot. Exhausted with still another steep climb, scrambling up and down goat-paths at the edge of precipitous slopes, they pitched their tents amongst the snow-peaks, at an altitude of 18,000 feet. The whole of the following morning was a steady climb, till at last the source of the Lidar lay five hundred feet below, hushed in its icy mantle. Next day, crossing frost-bound peaks and glaciers the procession reached Panchatarni, the place of the five streams. In every one of these the pilgrims were required to take a dip, passing from one stream to another in wet clothes, in spite of the intense cold. Careful to observe every rite of the pilgrimage, the Swami cleverly escaped the observation of his spiritual daughter and fulfilled the law to the last letter in this matter.

On August 2, the day of Amarnath itself, the pilgrims after making a steep climb, and then a descent in which one false step would have meant instant death, walked along the glacier mile after mile till they reached a flowing stream, in which they bathed before entering the Cave which was reached after another stiff ascent. The Swami who had fallen behind, perhaps intentionally, so as to be alone with his thoughts, came up and sent his waiting disciple on and bathed in the river. He then reached the cave, his whole frame shaking with emotion. The cave itself was "large enough to hold a cathedral, and the great ice-Siva, in a niche of deepest shadow, seemed as if throned on its own base." Then, his body covered with ashes, his face aflame with supreme devotion to Siva, he entered the shrine itself, nude, except for a loin-cloth; and kneeling in adoration he bowed low before the Lord. A song of praise from a hundred throats resounded in the cave, and the shining purity of the great ice-Lingam overpowered him. He almost swooned with emotion. A great mystical experience came to him, of which he never spoke, beyond saying that Siva Himself had appeared before him and that he had been granted the grace of Amarnath, the Lord of Immortality, not to die until he himself should choose to throw off his mortal bonds, corroboration of the words of his Divine Master regarding him,—"When he realises who and what he is, he will no longer remain in the body!" Also it might be that, in his wrestling with the soul to keep itself from merging in the Absolute, "was defeated or fulfilled that presentiment which had haunted him from childhood, that he would meet with death in a Siva-temple amongst the mountains." Indeed, so intense had been the shock of his mystical experience upon his physical frame that later on a doctor said, "Swamiji, it was almost death! Your heart ought naturally to have stopped beating. It has undergone a permanent enlargement instead."

Never had the Swami visited a religious place with such spiritual exaltation. To his European disciple he said afterwards "The image *was* the Lord Himself. It was all worship there. I never have been to anything so beautiful, so inspiring!" Later on, in the circle of his Gurubhais and disciples, he said dreamily, "I can well imagine, how this cave was first discovered. A party of shepherds, one summer day, must have lost their flocks and wandered in here in search of them. What must have been their feeling as they found themselves unexpectedly before this unmelting ice-image white like camphor, with the vault itself dripping offerings of water over it for centuries, unseen of mortal eyes! Then when they came home they whispered to the other shepherds in the valleys how they had suddenly come upon Mahâdeva!" Be that as it may, in the case of the Swami, it was truly so, in that he entered the cave and came face to face there with the Lord Himself! And if Amarnath had been an awesome religious experience to him, more so than Amarnath was the Swami to his companion. So saturated had his personality become with the Presence of that God that for days thereafter he could speak of nothing but Siva. Siva was all in all; Siva, the Eternal One, the Great Monk, rapt in meditation, aloof from all worldliness.

The journey down the mountain trails to Pahlgam was interesting. The party passed the celebrated Lake of Death, into which, on one occasion, some forty pilgrims had been plunged by an avalanche, started, it is believed, by the volume of their song. The Swami and some of the pilgrims took a short-cut from here by taking to a narrow sheep-track which led down the face of a steep cliff. At Pahlgam, there was joy when he again met his other European disciples, and the Swami talked of nothing but Siva and the shrine and the great verge of vision.

On August 8, the party were on their way to Srinagar where they remained until September 30. During this time the Swami frequently went off in his boat by himself and remained for days in strictest solitude. His desire for introspection and meditation became more and more pronounced. Nevertheless, he continued to instruct his disciples about India and his own ideas, dwelling in particular upon "the *inclusiveness* of his conception of the country and its religions," of his own longing to make Hinduism active and *aggressive,* a missionary faith, without its present "don't-touchism," and of the necessity of commingling the highest meditative with the most active, practical life. "To be as deep as the ocean and as broad as the sky," he said quoting Sri Ramakrishna, "was the ideal." "Sri Ramakrishna," he continued, "was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane he was perfectly active and capable." At one time, before the trip to Amarnath, when someone had asked him, "Sir, what should we do when we see the strong oppress the weak?" he had made reply, "Why, thrash the strong, of course!"

"Even forgiveness," he said on a similar occasion, "if weak and passive, is not good: to fight is better. *Forgive* when you can bring legions of angels to an easy victory. . . . The world is a battlefield, fight your way out." Another asked him, "Swamiji, ought one to die in defence of right, or ought one to learn never to react?" "I am for no reaction," replied the Swami slowly, and after a long pause added, "—for Sannyâsins. Self-defence for the householder!"

In Kashmir, the Swami and his party were treated with the greatest consideration by the Maharaja and all during his stay various high officials visited the

Swami's house-boat to receive religious instructions and converse with him upon general topics. The Swami had come at the express invitation of the Maharaja, to choose a tract of land for the establishment of a monastery and a Sanskrit college. There was a beautiful spot by the river-side, which was used as a camping ground by Europeans. The Swami chose this site and the Maharaja, approving of his choice expressed his willingness to give it to him for his educational scheme. Some time after the return from Amarnath, the Western disciples, caught up in the Swami's prevailing meditative mood, were desirous of practising meditation in silence and solitude. The Swami encouraged them, and suggested that they go and live in tents on the prospective Math ground, adding that it is auspicious, according to the Hindu idea, to have a new homestead blessed by women. And thus "a women's Math" was established there, as it were, and the Swami coming occasionally for a short visit would talk to them of his dream of realising the great idea of "by the people, for the people, as a joy to worker and to served."

It was a blow to the Swami, therefore, when about the middle of September, he heard officially that it would be impracticable to secure lands for the erection of his proposed monastery and Sanskrit college in Kashmir, for his choice was twice vetoed by the Resident. Though this news temporarily depressed him, the Swami began to understand, after much reflection, that for various reasons Kashmir, or any Native State for that matter would not be a suitable place for him to try the experiment of bringing his Indian followers into contact with European and *vice versa.* He realised that Bengal was far more suitable for any educational propaganda for India than this distant State; and Calcutta, the metropolis, was the intellectual centre of the country. Besides, so far as his having a monastery in a cool climate was concerned, that project had been taken up in earnest by his disciples, Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, and already they were on the look out for a tract of land in the hills of Kumaon for this purpose. The Swami accepted the obstacles that had come in his path, therefore, as the Will of the Mother, and felt that all was for the best.

Following the pilgrimage to Amarnath, the Swami's devotion concentrated itself on the Mother. The songs of Râmprasâd were constantly upon his lips. The strength which comes of the meditation on the Eternal One now shifted itself to the devotion of a child. And it was sweet and touching to see how he would worship, as Uma, the little four-year old daughter of his Mohammedan boatman. He told his disciples once during these days that "wherever he turned he was conscious of the Presence of the Mother, as if She were a person in the room." He felt that it was She or his own Master "Whose hands are clasped upon my own and who leads me as though I were a child." And now through the intensity of his spiritual personality, everything in the life of his comrades was associated with the thought of the Mother, as it had been before with that of Siva.

The strain of meditation became more and more intense and the Swami bitterly "complained of the malady of thought, which would consume a man, leaving him no time for sleep or rest, and would often become as insistent as a human voice." One day in the second week of September he had an experience, which can be compared only perhaps to that which he had had in the Dakshineswar temple-garden years ago, when at the bidding of Sri Ramakrishna he had gone to pray to the Mother to be relieved of the great strain of poverty that was upon him then.

He had gone in his boat to a solitary place, the only person he allowed to visit him was a certain Brâhmo doctor, who had become devotedly attached to him during his sojourn in Kashmir that summer, and who came regularly to enquire after his daily needs. When the doctor found him lost in thought, or in meditation he would leave him quietly without disturbing him. The Swami's brain seethed with the vision and the consciousness of the Mother, whose personality literally overshadowed him. It became at once the most ascetic torture and the most ecstatic blessedness. His mind was tuned to the highest pitch. Revelation *must* come, or the mind would give way.

One evening it came. He had centred "his whole attention on the dark, the painful and the inscrutable in the world, with the determination to reach, by this particular road, the One behind phenomena,"—for such was his conception of the Mother. His whole frame shook as if under an electric shock. Was this what the Yogis speak of as the awakening of the Kula-kundalini? Outside it was all stillness; but within him a world-destroying tempest raged. While his vision was intensest, he wrote a poem, "Kâli, the Mother"—now one of his best-known ones—in which a glimpse of his vision of the tumult of the universe, the *sturm und drâng* of the cosmos which he pictured as the mad joy of the Mother's Dance is given. Filled with this sublime consciousness he wrote to the last word; the pen fell from his hand; he himself dropped to the floor losing consciousness, his soul soaring into the highest forms of Bhâva-Samâdhi. The man who had swayed thousands in the West, who had roused the Indian consciousness as it never was roused since the days of the Achâryas, lay as if dead in a swoon of ecstasy and awe!

The Swami now gave himself to constant explanations of the worship of the Mother to his disciples and in calling upon Her, "Who is Herself, time, change and ceaseless energy." He would say, quoting the great Psalmist, "Though Thou slay me, yet will I trust in Thee," or "It is a mistake to hold that with all men pleasure is the motive. Quite as many are born to seek pain. There can be bliss in torture, too. Let us worship the Terror for its own sake." Again, "Learn to recognise the Mother as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow and annihilation as in that which makes for sweetness and joy!" Or "True, they garland Thee with skulls, but shrink back in fright, and call Thee, 'O All-merciful One' !" "Only by the worship of the Terrible, can the Terrible itself be overcome and immortality gained. Meditate on death! Meditate on death! Worship the Terrible, the Terrible, the Terrible! And the Mother Herself is Brahman! Even Her curse is a blessing. The heart must become a cremation-ground, pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt into ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come!" Writes Sister Niveditâ:

> 'And as he spoke, the underlying egoism of worship that is devoted to the *kind* God, to Providence, the consoling Divinity, without a heart for God in the earthquake, or God in the volcano, overwhelmed the listener. One saw that such worship was at bottom, as the Hindu calls it, merely 'shop-keeping,' and one realised the infinitely greater boldness and truth of the teaching that God manifests through evil *as well as* through good. One saw that the true attitude for the mind and will that are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact the determination, in the stern words of the Swami Vivekananda, 'to seek death not life, to hurl oneself upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible for evermore!' "

And often, now and later, in moments of severe illness or pain, he would be heard to exclaim, "She is the organ! She is the pain! And She is the giver of pain! Kali! Kali! Kali!" In all of his instructions these days he would say, "There must be no fear. No begging, but demanding,—*demanding* the Highest! The true devotees of the Mother are as hard as adamant and as fearless as lions. They are not the least upset if the whole universe suddenly crumbled into dust at their feet! *Make* Her listen to you. None of that *cringing* to Mother! Remember! She is all-powerful; She can make heroes even out of *stones*!"

Wherever, he would say, the Mother was, there was no fear, wherever there was renunciation or self-forgetfulness, wherever there was the vision that "Everything which one touches is pain," the child-soul turns to Mother for relief and support. And in the meditation on the skull and cross-bones of the Western mystic, he would see a dim reflection of the universal aspect of Mother-worship. His idea of the Divine Motherhood, the Power behind all manifestation, was as poetic as it was impersonal.

Following the experience related above, the Swami retired abruptly on September 30, to the Coloured Springs of Kshir-Bhavâni, leaving strict injunctions that no one was to follow him. It was not until October 6, that he returned. Before this famous shrine of the Mother he daily performed Homa and worshipped Her with the offerings of Kshira, or thickened milk, made from one maund of milk, rice and almonds, and told his beads like the humblest pilgrim. And, as a special Sâdhanâ, he worshipped every morning a Brâhman Pandit's little daughter as Umâ Kumâri, the Divine Virgin. He began to practise terrible austerities. It seemed as if he would tear off all the veils that covered his soul through years of work and relative thought and again be the child before the Divine Mother. Even though Her caresses might prove pain to the body, they would give illumination and freedom to his soul. All thought of Leader, Worker, or Teacher was gone. He was now only the monk, in all the nakedness of pure Sannyâs.

He was transfigured when he returned to Srinagar. He entered the house-boat, his hands raised in benediction; then he placed some marigolds which he had offered to the Mother on the head of every one of his disciples. "No more 'Hari Om!' It is all 'Mother' now!" he said, sitting down. "All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only 'Mother! Mother!' I have been very wrong. Mother said to me, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter My temples, and defile My images! What is that to you? Do *you* protect Me? Or do *I* protect you?' So there is no more patriotism. I am only a little child!" One day he had been pondering over the ruins and the desecration of the temple wrought by the vandalism of the Mohammedan invaders. Distressed at heart he thought, "How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance! If I were here then I would never have allowed such things. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother." It was then that he had heard the Mother speaking as above. The disciples sat silent, awe-inspired. They could not speak, "so tense was the spot with something that stilled thoughts." "I may not tell you more now," he said addressing his disciples before leaving, "it is not in order. But spiritually, *spiritually,* I was not bound down!"

Though again with his disciples, they saw little of him. For hours he would walk beside the river in the secluded woods, absorbed within himself, so much so that he would not even see his companions on the roof of their house-boat. One day he appeared before them with shaven head, dressed as the simplest Sannyâsin, and with a look of unapproachable austerity on his face. Quoting from his own poem, "Kali The Mother," he interrupted himself to say, "It all came true, every word of it; and I have proved it, *for I have hugged the Form of Death*!" And here and there, the details of that austerity and fasting and self-renunciation he had practised at Kshir-Bhavani, and the revelations that had come to him were touched upon in his remarks. In his meditation on the Terrible in the dark hours of the nights at Kshir-Bhavani, there were other visions which he confided only to one or two of his Gurubhais, and which are too sacred to reveal to the public. It seemed, indeed, as if the Swami's whole nature rose in a supreme effort in a final struggle to rise above all worldly Samskâras.

At this same shrine, in the course of worship, one day, the Swami brooding with pain on the dilapidated condition of the temple, wished in his heart that he were able to build a new one there in its place, just as he wished to build his monasteries elsewhere, especially the temple to Sri Ramakrishna in the new Math at Belur. He was startled from his reveries by the voice of the Mother Herself saying to him, "My child! If I so wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot." "Since I heard that Divine Voice," said the Swami to a disciple in Calcutta much later, "I have ceased making any more plans. Let these things be as Mother wills!"

During these days also, the Swami had an experience of a disquieting nature. Alluding to it he spoke later as "a crisis in his life." A disciple of a Mohammedan Fakir used to come to him occasionally, attracted by his personality. Hearing one day that he was suffering from fever and severe headache, the Swami out of compassion touched him on the head with his fingers and, to his great surprise, the man's ailments left him. After that he became very much devoted to the Swami, and came to him oftener than before. But the man's Guru, the Fakir, when he heard of this, became bitterly jealous of the Swami, and afraid lest his disciple forsake him, spoke ill of the Swami and warned his disciple not to see him. Finding that his words had no effect, the man was irate and abused the Swami to his disciple. And actuated by a spirit of revenge, as also, perhaps, to convince him of his greater psychic power, he threatened to use charms against the Swami and prophesied that he would vomit and feel giddy before he left Kashmir. This actually came about and the Swami was precipitated into great perplexity of mind and furious wrath, not against the Fakir but against himself and his Master. He thought: "What good is Sri Ramakrishna to me?—What good are all my realisations and preaching of Vedânta and the omnipotence of the Soul within, when I myself could not save myself from the diabolical powers of a black magician?" This experience exercised his mind so much that even when he reached Calcutta three weeks later, it continued to agitate him and he told the Holy Mother, who happened to be there at the time, all about it.

Preparations were now made to go to the plains. The Swami spoke in a very casual way about the future. He had no plans; all that he would wish for himself was the life of the monk, of silence and forgottenness. "'Swamiji' was dead and gone. Who was he that he should feel the urge for teaching the world? It was all fuss and vanity. The Mother had no need of him, but only he of Her. Work, when one had seen this, was nothing but illusion." An overmastering love enveloped him. He believed now in nothing but love, love, love,—love so intense that, it would be impossible for even the vilest enemies to resist it. To continue, in the words of Sister Nivedita:

> ". . . I can give no idea of the *vastness* of which all this was utterance,—as if no blow, to any in the world, could pass and leave our Master's heart untouched; as if no pain, even to that of death, could elicit anything but love and blessing.
>
> "He told us the story of Vasishtha and Viswâmitra ; of Vasishtha's hundred descendants slain; and the sage left alone, landless and helpless, to live out his life. Then he pictured the hut standing in the moonlight, amongst the trees, and Vasishtha and his wife within. He is poring intently over some precious page, written by his great rival, when she draws near and hangs over him for a moment, saying, 'Look, how bright is the moon tonight!' And he, without looking up,—'But ten thousand times brighter, my love, is the intellect of Viswamitra!'
>
> "All forgotten! the deaths of his hundred children, his own wrongs, and his sufferings, and his heart lost in admiration of the genius of his foe! Such, said the Swami, should be our love also, like that of Vasishtha for Viswamitra, without the slightest tinge of personal memory."

The whole party came back to Baramulla on October 11, and left for Lahore the next day. The European disciples had decided to accompany the Swami thither, and wait there for some days, and then go sight-seeing in some of the principal cities of Northern India such as, Delhi, Agra, etc., with Swami Saradananda. The river trip to Baramulla was noticeable only for the extreme silence of the Swami, who preferred to be almost entirely by himself, and walked at the riverside alone mornings and evenings. He looked so ill and worn out that his companions feared a break-down. Writes Sister Nivedita:

> "The physical ebb of the great experience through which he had just passed—for even suffering becomes impossible,

when a given point of weariness is reached; and similarly, the body refuses to harbour a certain intensity of the spiritual life for an indefinite period!—was leaving him, doubtless, more exhausted, than he himself suspected. All this contributed, one imagines, to a feeling that none of us knew for how long a time we might now be parting."

XXXIII

CONSECRATION OF THE MATH: ITS SCOPE AND IDEALS

The Swami left Lahore attended by Swami Sadananda, who had hurried down thither from Almora on the receipt of a wire from him. They arrived at the monastery at Belur on October 18. The Swami's unexpected appearance made his brother monks and disciples very happy but their joy gave place to pain when they saw how pale and ill he was.

Among the members who had joined the monastery both before and during his absence were those who later became Swamis Vimalânanda, Bodhânanda, Kalyânânanda and Somânanda; the former two had joined when the Math was at Alambazar and the latter at Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house. These, with the other disciples, had followed regular courses of study on the Vedas, Hindu theology and even material science. Paramount, of course, were the worship of the Master, and hours of meditation and devotion.

Notwithstanding his failing health the Swami resumed his old life with the monks. Hours were spent in religious converse and question-classes were held; the scriptures were read and commented upon, and he took up seriously the work of training the members. He instituted regulations and monastic discipline with spiritual and intellectual work for certain hours of the day. On the very day of his arrival he thrilled his auditors by reading, with his characteristic eloquence and depth of feeling, the three poems composed by him in Kashmir. Every word of the poems, as uttered by him, seemed ensouled with his own realisations. On the nineteenth and the twentieth he performed the Homa ceremony. The next three days were given over to the services and gatherings of the lay disciples of the Order on the occasion of the great religious festival of Durgâ Pujâ. On the twenty-fourth the Swami Turiyananda arrived from Almora. Everything was now being centred, as it were, in the monastery, and the devotional fervour of the Baranagore days seemed to shine forth anew.

From November 1, the Swami's movements alternated between the monastery and the residence of Balaram Babu in Baghbazar. On the fifth of the month he received at the Math, Mr. Rishibar Mukherjee, the Chief Justice and Mr. Nilambar Mukherjee, the Prime Minister of Kashmir. On the following day he had as his guests there the European disciples who had accompanied him to Kashmir and who had now returned to Calcutta, after a tour of the historic cities in Northern India.

Three days after, on November 12, the day of the Kâli Pujâ, the Holy Mother, accompanied by a number of women devotees, visited the site of the permanent abode of the Ramakrishna Order. The monks were all present and had made elaborate arrangements for worship. The picture of the Master worshipped in the Math had been taken by them thither. The Holy Mother had also brought her own image of the Master, and with special worship she blessed the place.

In the afternoon she with her party, as also the Swami with Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda, returned to Calcutta to perform at the request of the Swami, that evening, the opening ceremony of Sister Nivedita Girls' School in Baghbazar. At the end of the ceremony the Holy Mother "prayed that the blessing of the Great Mother of the universe might be upon the school and that the girls it should train be ideal girls.'' And of this blessing Sister Nivedita herself has written,—''I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessing, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future.''

From his first meeting with Sister Nivedita, the Swami had discussed with her at great length about the situation of Indian women, and his plans for the education of Hindu girls. She was well known as an educator in England and had come to India expressly to be of service to Indian women. He had talked with her, in an especial sense, about his plans for the amelioration of the conditions of the women of his native land. It was understood, during her stay both in Calcutta and Almora, and later during her wanderings with the Swami in Kashmir, that at the first opportunity, she would open a girls' school in Calcutta, so as ''to make some educational discovery, which would be qualitatively true and universally applicable to the work of the modern education of Indian women'' at large. With this in mind, after touring in Northern India with the group of her European companions she decided to forget that she was European and came to live with the Holy Mother. Later, a separate house near by was rented for her, but she spent her nights with the women devotees of the Holy Mother's household. The Swami, when in Calcutta, saw her frequently and gave her additional insight into the Indian consciousness and into the nature of work she had assumed; this insight she has embodied in her book, ''The Web of Indian Life.'' At the Holy Mother's residence she came in touch with several orthodox women who were well-versed in the epics, the dramas and the religion of Hinduism, and whose lives were examples of the value and realisations of Hinduism to their European guest. This was of especial advantage to her, and she herself lived the life of a Hindu Brahmachârini and soon became altogether Hinduised.

This marks the beginning of Sister Nivedita's work in India. The Swami evinced the most interest in it at the time. He gave her perfect liberty in the elucidation of her ideas. She was to be free from collaborators, if she so chose; above all, she might, if she so wished, give her work "a definite religious colour" or even make it sectarian. But he added knowingly: "You wish through a sect to rise beyond all sects." Eventually it should include all sects, not only within, but without the pale of Hinduism. The Swami once told her, "If amidst their new tasks the Indian women of the future would only remember now and then to say, 'Siva! Siva!' it would be sufficient worship." In giving his idea of what a worker in the cause of womanhood should be, he once said to Sister Nivedita, "Yes, you have faith, but you have not that burning enthusiasm that you need! You should be consuming energy." Then he blessed her and "she became a consuming energy in its cause."

Though the ceremony of consecration of the Ramakrishna Math took place on December 9, the consecration of the newly-bought Math grounds had been celebrated long ago, in one of the early days of March, 1898. On this latter occasion, the Swami himself performed all the sacred rites, helped by his Gurubhais and disciples, on the new monastery grounds. The proceedings, throughout, were most impressive and inspiring. After making ablutions in the Ganges, the Swami put on a new Geruâ robe, entered the chapel and sat in meditation on the worshipper's seat. He then worshipped the relics of Sri

Ramakrishna with great veneration, burying them under heaps of flowers and Bilva leaves, and became again absorbed in deep meditation. Swami Premananda and the other monks of the Brotherhood stood at the door watching him worship.

After worship a procession was formed of the whole Brotherhood, which wended its way by the bank of the Ganges from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to the site of the new monastery, led by the Swami who carried on his right shoulder the urn containing the hallowed remains of Sri Ramakrishna. The sound of the blowing of conch-shells and the beating of gongs resounded across the river. On the way the Swami said to a disciple, "The Master once told me, 'I will go and live wheresoever it will be your pleasure to take me, carrying me on your shoulders—be it under a tree or in the humblest cottage!' With faith in that gracious promise I myself am now carrying him to the site of our future Math. Know for certain, my boy, that so long as his name inspires his followers with his ideals of purity, holiness and loving spirit of charity to all men, even so long shall he, the Master, sanctify the place with his hallowed presence." When the Math was in sight, the Swami spoke of the glorious future which he felt it was to have: "It would be a centre in which would be recognised and practised a grand harmony of all creeds and faiths as exemplified in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, and only ideas of religion in its universal aspect would be preached. And from this centre of universal toleration would go forth the shining message of good-will and peace and harmony to deluge the whole world." He warned them of the danger of sects in time arising within its fold.

Laying the sacred urn on the special seat spread on the Math grounds, the Swami and with him all the others prostrated themselves in fervent salutation before it. After the solemn Pujâ rites he lit the sacrificial fire and performed the Virajâ Homa, at which only the Sannyâsins of the Order could be present. Having himself cooked the Pâyasânnam, or sweetened milk-rice, with the help of his Sannyâsin brethren, he offered it to the Master. This concluded the consecration ceremony. The Swami then addressed the congregation as follows: "Do you all, my brothers, pray to the Lord with all your heart and soul, that He, the Divine Incarnation of the age, may bless this place with His hallowed Presence for ever and ever, and make it a unique centre, a Punyakshetra, of harmony of all the different religions and sects, for the good of the Many, for the happiness of the Many!" All with folded palms, responded to the call by joining in the prayer to the Lord. Then the return procession formed, Sarat Chandra, the Swami's disciple, carrying, at the injunction of his Guru, the sacred urn on his head.

This particular day was a "red letter day" in the history of the Ramakrishna Order. The very atmosphere vibrated with spirituality. The Swami was jubilant, ecstatic. Now, he felt, was accomplished the tremendous task, of finding a permanent place and sufficient means to build a temple for the Master with a monastery for his Gurubhais and the future generations, as the headquarters of the Order, for the perpetuation and propagation of his Master's teachings. He said: "By the will of the Lord is established today His Dharmakshetra. Today I feel free from the weight of the responsibility which I have carried with me for twelve long years. And now a vision comes to my mind! This Math shall become a great centre of learning and Sâdhanâ. Pious householders will erect houses for themselves on the grounds round this future religious university and live there, with the Sannyâsins in the centre. To the south, the followers of the Lord from England and America will come and make their abode!" Turning to a disciple, he asked triumphantly, "What do you think of it?" The disciple having reverently expressed his doubt if this "most excellent piece of fancy" would ever be materialised, the Swami cried out, "Fancy, do you say! Hear me, O, you of little faith! Time will fulfil all my expectations. I am now only laying the foundation, as it were. Great things will come later on. I will do my share of the task; and I shall instil into you all the various ideas which you will in the future have to work out! The highest principles and ideals of religion have not only to be studied and comprehended, but brought into the practical field of life. Do you understand?"

A few days later, the same disciple had the privilege of hearing some of the Swami's ideas of the scope and ideals of the Math, and the regulations and disciplines which he wished to be observed there in the future. These have been recorded by the disciple from which the following extracts will be found most suggestive and illuminating, as they outline the Swami's schemes of national education and of philanthropic work in his own country. As he was walking to and fro on the grounds of the new Math he said, pointing to an old cottage:

> "There will be the place for the Sâdhus to live in. This Math will be the central institution for the practice of religion and the culture of knowledge. The spiritual force emanating from here will permeate the whole world, turning the currents of men's activities and aspirations into new channels. From here will be disseminated ideals harmonising Jnâna, Bhakti, Yoga and Karma. The time will come when by the mere will of the Sannyâsins of this Math life will vibrate into

the deadened souls of men. All these visions are rising before me.

"On that land to the south will be the Temple of Learning, modelled after the manner of our ancient Tols. In it will be taught Grammar, Philosophy, Arts, Science, Literature, Rhetoric, Hindu Codes of Law, Scriptures, and English. There the young Brahmachârins will live and study the Sâstras. The Math will provide them with food, clothing, etc. After five years' training these Brahmachârins will be at liberty to return to their homes and lead the householder's life; or, if they prefer, they may take the vow of Sannyâsa with the sanction of the Superiors of the Math. If any of these Brahmachârins are found to be disorderly or of bad character, the Math authorities will have the power to turn them out. Here boys will be taught irrespective of caste or creed. But those who would like to observe the orthodox customs of their respective castes and creeds, will have to separately arrange for their food and so forth. They will attend the classes only in common with the rest. The authorities shall keep a strict watch on their character too. No one will be entitled to admission into the monastic order who has not received his training here. Thus, in course of time, the Math work will be conducted wholly with a personnel drawn from them."

Disciple: "Then, sir, you mean to re-introduce the old Gurukula system in the country?"

Swamiji: "Why, assuredly, yes! There is no scope whatever in the modern system of education for the unfoldment of the Brahmavidyâ. The old institution of Brahmacharya must be established anew. But its foundation must be laid on a broad basis, and many changes and modifications suited to the needs of the times will have to be introduced into it, of which I shall tell you later on.

"That plot of land adjoining ours in the south should be acquired in time. There will be the Annasatra or a Feeding Home, of the Math, in the name of Sri Ramakrishna, where proper arrangements will be made for serving food to those who are really poor and needy, regarding them as forms of Nârâyana. The scope of its work will be regulated according to the funds at its disposal; it may even be started with two or three people. Enthusiastic Brahmachârins will have to be trained to conduct this Annasatra. They themselves should find means for its support, even by begging from door to door. The Math will not be allowed to lend any pecuniary aid to it. When the

Brahmachârins have completed their five years' training in this Home of Service in that way, then only they will have the right of admission into the Temple of Learning branch of the monastery. Thus after ten years of training in all, they will be entitled to enter the Sannyâsa Ashrama after due initiation by the Math authorities,—of course if they have a mind to become Sannyâsins, and if the latter find them fit for it. But the President of the Math may, in the case of some specially gifted Brahmachârin, waive this rule and give Sannyâsa at any time in spite of this rule. You see I have all these ideas in my head."

Disciple: "Sir, what is the object of establishing these three separate branches in the Math?"

Swamiji: "Don't you see? There should be, first, Annadâna, or the giving of food and other necessaries of physical life; next, Vidyâdâna, or the imparting of intellectual knowledge; and, last of all, Jnânadâna, or the conferring of spiritual knowledge. The harmonising of these three aspects which conduce to the making of *Man,* must be the sole duty of the Math. By devoting themselves to the work of the Annasatra in the manner indicated, the idea of working for others by practical means and that of serving humanity in the spirit of worship, will be firmly implanted in the minds of the Brahmachârins. This will gradually purify their mind, leading to the development of Sâttvic thoughts and aspirations. And such alone are capable of receiving and retaining the Aparâ and the Parâ Vidyâ, the secular and the supreme knowledge and thus become eligible for Sannyâsa. . . ."

Disciple: "Sir, your words encourage me to learn something more of your ideas about the Annasatras and Sevâsramas."

Swamiji: "There should be well-ventilated rooms in these Homes, in each of which two or three of the poor or the diseased would live. They should have comfortable bedding and clean clothes. There should be a doctor for them who would come and see them once or twice a week, or as often as convenient. The Sevâsrama will be a department of the Annasatra, in which the diseased will be nursed and well taken care of. In time, as funds permit, a big kitchen will be built and any number of hungry people will be fed at all times of the day to their hearts' content. None shall be refused under any circumstances. The gruel strained off from the cooked rice, draining into the Ganges will turn its waters white! Oh, how glad at heart I shall be to see an Annasatra working on such a grand scale here!"

Speaking thus the Swami stood for a while gazing dreamily at the Ganges, as if fathoming the future to see that day. He broke his reverie by saying affectionately to the disciple:

"Who knows when the sleeping lion will be aroused in one or other of you! If the Mother but kindles in the soul of any one of you a spark of Her Divine power, hundreds of such Annasatras will be opened all over the country! Know this, that Jnâna, Bhakti and Sakti *are already* in every living being. It is only the difference in the degree of their manifestation that makes one great or small. It is as if a curtain were drawn between us and that perfection. When that is removed, the whole of Nature is at our feet. Then, whatever we want, whatever we will, will come to pass.

"If the Lord wills, we shall make this Math a great centre of harmony. Our Lord is the visible embodiment of the perfect harmony of all ideals. His throne will remain unshaken in the world of spirituality if we keep alive that ideal of harmony here. We must see to it that people of all sects and creeds, from the Brâhmana down to the Chandâla, will find on coming here their respective ideals manifested. The other day when we installed the image of Sri Ramakrishna on the grounds of this Math, I saw his ideas emanating from here flooding the whole universe with their radiance! I for one am doing and shall do my best to elucidate his broad ideas to all people,—you all also do the same. What avails the mere reading of Vedânta? We have to exemplify the truth of the pure Advaita in practical life. This Advaitavâda has so long been kept hidden in the forests and mountain-caves. It has been given to me to bring it out from seclusion and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society. The sound of the Advaita drum must resound in every hearth and home, in meadows and groves, over hills and plains. Come all of you to my assistance and set yourselves to work."

Disciple: "But, sir, my mind inclines rather to realise the Advaita state through meditation than to manifest it in action."

Swamiji: "Why! What is the use of remaining always stupefied in Jadasamâdhi? Under the inspiration of Advaita why not sometimes dance like Siva, and sometimes remain immersed in superconsciousness? Who enjoys a delicacy more,—he who eats it all by himself, or he who shares it with others? Granted that by realising the Atman in meditation you attain Mukti, what of that to the world? We have to take the whole universe with us to Mukti! We shall set a conflagration in Mahâmâya's dominions! Then only you will be established in the Eternal Truth. O, what can compare with that Bliss, immeasurable, 'infinite as the skies!' In that state you will be speechless, carried beyond yourself, by seeing your own Self in every being that breathes, and in every atom of the universe. When you realise this, you cannot live in this world without treating everyone with exceeding love and compassion. This is indeed practical Vedânta."

The great ceremony narrated above was only that of the consecration of the place. The grounds were as yet not in order; the old buildings, previously used as the residential quarters of a boat-building centre, were undergoing considerable additions and alterations, and consequently, were not as yet ready for habitation. Under the Swami's orders the building was begun in April 1898, and though it was pushed through with all haste, it was not completed till the beginning of the following year. An entire upper storey with a verandah facing the Ganges had to be built, and at the same time, the building which contains the refectory of the monks and the chapel of Sri Ramakrishna had to be constructed. It was not until January 2, 1899, that the Math was finally removed from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to what is now called the Belur Math, although on December 9, 1898, the installation ceremony of the image of Sri Ramakrishna had been celebrated in the new monastery and the Swami and several monks lived there from that time on.

XXXIV

AMONGST HIS OWN PEOPLE

The Swami was suffering from asthma in these days. On October 27, he had his chest examined, at the request of some of the monks, by the well-known specialist, Dr. R. L. Dutt, who in consultation with some other doctors gave the opinion that the Swami must be careful of himself. A clot of blood was found to have been formed in his left eye, possibly due to tremendous concentration. The monks made efforts constantly to keep him from going into the deeper states of meditation, fearing that the Great and Final Meditation might come upon him at any time, and that he might throw off the body like a worn-out garment. So abstracted was his mind from outward surroundings in these days, that often he would not hear the answer to questions he himself had asked.

Two or three days after the Swami's arrival from Kashmir, a disciple,—whom Swami Brahmananda had instructed to try to bring the Swami down, if possible, from his exalted state,—on entering the room, found him seated cross-legged, facing the east, apparently totally abstracted. It was at this time that the clot of blood was observed in his left eye. When the Swami was asked about it he replied casually, "Oh, it is nothing! It might be due to my intense practice of meditation at Kshir-Bhavani." With the intention of diverting his mind, the disciple begged him to tell the story of his pilgrimage to Amarnath. In telling the tale he suddenly exclaimed, "Ever since I went to Amarnath, Siva Himself has entered into my brain. He *will not* go!" After a short silence he went on, "On my way to Amarnath, I climbed up a specially steep ascent, not used by the pilgrims. A sort of determination forced me to travel by that solitary path." He wanted to be altogether alone, free from all distractions. His whole mind was burning with Siva! He forgot in those moments that he had a body. His personality was filled with a Great Consciousness. "Probably, my boy," continued the Swami, "the exertion has slightly shaken the system. The sensation of bitter cold there was like innumerable pin-pricks. I also went into the cave with only a loin cloth on, my body being covered only with ashes. At the time I felt neither heat nor cold. On coming out, however, I was benumbed! . . ." The disciple then questioned him as to the legend of the white pigeons which are said to have their abode in the cave of Amarnath, and the sight of which on leaving the shrine grants, the legend holds, the fulfilment of any desire and heightens the merit of the pilgrimage accomplished. The Swami replied: "Yes! Yes! I know! I saw three or four white pigeons, but I could not be sure whether they belonged to the cave or lived in the adjoining hills."

He spoke of the Divine Voice heard by him at the temple of Kshir-Bhavani. When the disciple sought to explain it away by suggesting that it might be a wholly subjective experience, the echo of intensely powerful thoughts with no objective reality, he gravely remarked: "Whether it be from within yourself, or from some external agency, if you hear with your own ear, *exactly* as you are hearing my words, a voice not connected with any form speaking to you from the skies, will you doubt its reality?"

Later on, the disciple asked the Swami if he had ever seen ghosts and spirits. He replied that the spirit of one of his relations had appeared to him now and then bringing news of far-off places. "But," he said, "on enquiry I found that its words were not always true. In a place of pilgrimage I prayed for its emancipation, and since then I have not seen that spirit again."

The Swami was obliged to stay most of the time in Calcutta for treatment, but he did not allow his illness to prevent him from meeting the numerous visitors who flocked to him for instruction. One of his disciples writes of the Swami's activity in those days:

> "A gathering was an everyday occurrence when Swamiji used to stay in Calcutta. At every hour of the day, from early morning till eight or nine at night, men would flock to him. This naturally occasioned much irregularity in his meals; so, his Gurubhais and friends desiring to put a stop to this state of things, strongly advised him not to receive visitors except at appointed hours. But the loving heart of Swamiji who was ever ready to go to any length to help others, was so melted with compassion at the sight of the thirst for religion in the people, that in spite of ill-health he did not comply with any request of the kind. His only reply was, 'They take so much trouble to come, walking all the way from their homes, and can I, sitting here, not speak a few words to them, merely because I risk my health a little?' "

The Swami at that time was an embodiment of love. His heart went out to meet everybody. His grace descended upon all, saints and sinners alike. The misery of the world afflicted him terribly. Perhaps he also knew that the time for his final passing away was approaching. So he could not deny his blessings and benediction to anybody. As a result it was found that many persons who apparently led indifferent lives were initiated by him into the mysteries of spirituality. Soon a whisper went round the Math that the Swami was not a proper judge of a man's inner propensities, that one could easily satisfy him with a few words of praise. Otherwise how could he give his blessings to men of such worldly propensities? These gossips particularly wounded the feeling of a disciple and he one day, as the Swami was taking his evening stroll in the Math compound, approached him and said, "Well, Swamiji, I have something to ask you." "Yes," said the Swami without turning his head. Then the disciple said, "Much talk is going round the Math that you cannot properly discriminate a right person from a wrong one. You bestow your grace upon everybody without looking into his previous life or inner propensities. As a result we find some of your disciples leading an indifferent life even after receiving your blessings." The Swami suddenly turned his head towards the disciple and exclaimed moved with emotion, "My boy, do you say that I do not know a man! What! When I see a man I not only find out the working of his inner self, but even get a glimpse of his previous life. I know what is going on in his subconscious mind. Even he does not know it. But, then, do you know why I bless such persons? The poor souls have knocked at every gate to get a little peace of mind. But they have been refused everywhere. They have come to me at last. If I, too, refuse them, they will have nothing else to fall back upon. So I do not discriminate. Oh, they are so afflicted! The world is so full of miseries!"

In this he was so like his Master, Sri Ramakrishna!

Sister Nivedita and her school were a constant source of interest to the Swami, and he always endeavoured to make the life she had adopted easier. Sometimes he would ask her to eat with him; he would then prepare special dishes for her, and force her to take them in his presence, for he knew that she was then undergoing rigorous austerities, living on a spare diet of milk and fruit and sleeping on a bare board, as the stricter nuns do in the convents of the West. He would now and then ask her to cook delicacies for him, so that she too might partake of them. He would also make others eat a little of the food cooked by her, thus breaking down to a great extent the iron barriers of orthodoxy among his own people with regard to her. And, as for his own orthodox disciples, he was constantly breaking the bonds of meaningless customs and traditions of ages. He would sometimes test their loyalty to him by asking them to partake, as his Prasâd, of some food concerning which orthodoxy cries, "Hands off!" As regards Sister Nivedita, he made every effort to have her accepted by the Hindu society, and was always ready to listen to her in a discussion.

One day, in company with Swami Yogananda and Sarat Chandra, the Swami took the Sister to see the Calcutta Zoological Gardens. The superintendent, Rai Bahadur Ramabrahma Sanyal, hearing of his visit, received him and his party cordially at the entrance, and showed them all the animal-houses. The Swami was desirous of seeing the feeding of the lions and the tigers; that was done for him at the order of the superintendent. The snakes interested him, and he entered into a long discussion on the history of the evolution of reptiles. Next it was the monkey-house. Here one calls to mind, how both in India and in the West, on seeing the almost-human members of this species, he would sometimes address them curiously, saying, "Well, how did you get into that body? What frightful Karma in the past has brought you here?"

After the partaking of light refreshments a long conversation ensued. The superintendent was a student of Botany and Zoology and held strongly to the Darwinian theory of evolution. But the Swami, though admitting Darwin's theory to be sound enough to a certain extent, assailed it with a greater theory, that of Patanjali's "filling in of nature," which, he showed, offered the ultimate solution of the causes of evolution. He pointed out that Patanjali, unlike the Western philosophers, did not believe in 'Struggle for existence,' 'Survival of the fittest,' and 'Natural selection' as causes in the evolution of one species into another. Howsoever true these may be in the lower order of nature, struggle and competition, the Swami held, instead of making for progress, retard the development of human character. Perfection, according to the ancient Hindu sages, is man's real nature; only it is prevented from manifestation by certain obstacles, and when these are removed it manifests itself fully. And it is through education and culture, through meditation and concentration, and, above all, through renunciation and sacrifice that the obstacles are removed. Thus the competitive struggle of sex and food, he maintained, did not apply to the human plane, in its higher aspects; for the sages struggled to grow above and away from nature, to conquer animal instinct, to conquer even the sense of progress and merge the human nature in the Divine.

The superintendent much pleased exclaimed, "Swamiji, that is a wonderful theory! We need in India at the present day more men like you, versed in Eastern and Western philosophy, to point out to our educated community their onesidedness and to correct their fallacies and confusions." The same evening he explained more clearly and elaborately his theory of evolution with special reference to the needs of modern India, to a group of friends and visitors, at Balaram Babu's house.

To relate it briefly, he said that Darwin's theory is applicable to the animal and vegetable kingdoms, but not to the human kingdom where reason and knowledge are highly developed. In our saints and ideal men we find no trace of struggle whatever, and no tendency to rise higher or grow stronger by the destruction of others. There we find sacrifice instead. The more one can sacrifice the greater is he. The struggle of a rational man is with his internal nature. The more he succeeds in controlling the mind the greater is he. On being questioned, "Why then do you emphasise so much the need of our physical improvement?"—the Swami thundered:

> "Are you men? You are no better than animals, satisfied with eating, sleeping and propagating, and haunted by fear! If you had not had in you a little rationality, you would have been turned into quadrupeds by this time! Devoid of self-respect, you are full of jealousy among yourselves, and have made yourselves objects of contempt to foreigners! Throw aside your vain bragging, your theories and so forth, and reflect calmly on the doings and dealings of your everyday life. Because you are governed by animal nature, therefore I teach you to seek for success first in the struggle for existence, and to attend to the building up of your physique, so that you may be able to wrestle all the better with your mind. The physically weak, I say again and again, are unfit for the realisation of the Self! When once the mind is controlled and man is the master of his self, it does not matter whether the body is strong or not, for then he is not dominated by it."

Sleep rarely visited the Swami at this period. His disease kept his brain constantly active, and at frequent intervals in the night and in the early hours of the morning he was awake. He therefore earnestly desired rest, as is evidenced by the following incident. It was an eclipse of the sun. He was at Balaram Babu's house, and had just eaten a meal cooked by a disciple, who was rubbing his feet gently, when suddenly the sound of conch-shells and the ringing of bells were heard, announcing the approach of the eclipse. "Well," said the Swami, "the eclipse of the sun has begun. Let me have a nap." Later when the sky had become quite dark, he remarked, "Isn't it an eclipse, indeed!" Then he turned over to sleep. Some time after, he arose and said to the disciple attending on him, "They say a man is rewarded a hundredfold in what he may desire or do during the time of an eclipse. I thought that if I could sleep soundly just a little now, I should get good sleep in the future. But it was not to be. I have slept for about fifteen minutes only. The Divine Mother has not blessed this body with sound sleep."

One of the events of these days, which pleased the Swami greatly, was the starting of the *Udbodhan* as the Bengalee fortnightly organ of the Order. Swami Trigunatita volunteered to be its editor and manager, with a few Brahmachârins to help him. A press was bought and the journal made its appearance on January 14, 1899. The Swami gave directions about the lines along which the paper should be conducted. Nothing but *positive* ideas for the physical, mental and spiritual improvement of the race should find place in the magazine. Instead of criticising and finding fault with the thoughts and aspirations of mankind as embodied in the literature, philosophy, poetry, arts, etc., of ancient and modern times, it should point out the way in which they might be made the more conducive to progress. It should never attack or seek to destroy anyone's faith. The highest doctrines of the Vedas and the Vedânta should be presented to the people in the simplest way, so that by diffusing true culture and knowledge it might in time be able to raise the Chandâla to the status of the Brâhmana. It should stand for universal harmony as preached by Sri Ramakrishna, and scatter his ideals of love, purity and renunciation. The untiring zeal and perseverance, marked by wonderful self-denial, with which Swami Trigunatita laboured for the success of the journal was most exemplary, and, as the Swami remarked, only an unselfish Sannyâsin could do such heroic work.

It was on December 16, that the Swami announced to the monks that he would go for a short change to Vaidyanath, and that later on, probably in the summer, he would again visit Europe and America. The Swami insisted constantly on the necessity of performing works of service and of mercy, and aroused in the monks the desire to consecrate their lives to this ideal. On December 19, the Swami, attended by Harendra Nath, a Brahmachâri disciple, left for Vaidyanath, where he was the guest of Babu Priyanath Mukherjee. Here he busied himself with private studies, in writing letters, and in taking much exercise, spending long hours in walking. He was much alone those days, and removed from all public and business concerns, his mind tended to the meditative state, however much he tried to force himself to rest. On the whole, his health was bad, and here, for a time, complications arose. A violent form of asthma set in, causing him severe discomfort. In one of the asthmatic attacks he was almost suffocated; those who stood about him feared that the time had come for him to leave his body.

It was at the house of the same gentleman, when he was staying with Swami Niranjanananda, that while out for a walk one day, they found a man lying helpless on the roadside, in the cold of winter, suffering from acute dysentery. The poor man had only a rag on, and that too was soiled, and he was crying with pain. The Swami wondered how he could help him. He himself was only a guest. How could he take such a patient there without his host's knowledge and consent? But he must do so, at any cost! With the help of his Gurubhai he gently raised the sufferer to his feet, and both lending their support brought him slowly to the house. There they cleansed and clothed his body, and put hot fomentations on him. The two Gurubhais nursed the sick man back to recovery. The host, instead of being vexed, was lost in admiration, and realised that the heart of Vivekananda was as great as his intellect!

During the Swami's absence from Calcutta, the Holy Mother visited the new monastery on December 20, 1898. On January 2, 1899, the Math was finally removed entirely from Nilambar Mukherjee's garden-house to its present quarters. Sister Nivedita, on the invitation of the monks, gave a series of lessons to the Brahmachârins on Physiology, Botany, Arts and Painting, and on the Kindergarten system. The Swami was kept regularly informed of the movements of his Gurubhais and of the work at the monastery by letters sent to him almost daily at Vaidyanath.

Among the many epistles which he wrote during this period, that written to a certain Bengalee woman-disciple, is particularly interesting, as it gives glimpses of his ideas on the origin of custom, widow-marriage, liberty, and the psychology of the religious consciousness. It reads in part as follows:

"Some very important questions have been raised in your letter. . . .

"(1) Rishi, Muni, or God—none has the power to force an institution on society. When the needs of the times press hard on it, society adopts certain customs for self-preservation. Rishis have only recorded those customs. As a man often resorts even to such means as are good for immediate self-protection, but which are very injurious in the future, so also, society not infrequently saves itself for the time being, but these immediate means which contributed to its preservation turn out to be terrible in the long run.

"For example, take the prohibition of widow-marriage in our country. Don't think that Rishis or wicked men introduced the law pertaining to it. Notwithstanding the desire of men to keep women completely under their control, they never could succeed in introducing those laws without betaking themselves to the aid of a social necessity of the time. Of this custom two points should be specially observed:

"(a) Widow-marriage takes place among the lower classes.

"(b) Among the higher classes the number of women is greater than that of men.

"Now, if it be the rule to marry every girl, it is difficult enough to get one husband apiece; then how to get, by and by, two or three for each? Therefore has society put one party under disadvantage, *i.e.*, it does not let her have a second husband, who has had one; if it did, one maid would have to go without a husband. On the other hand, widow-marriage obtains in communities having a greater number of men than women, as in their case the objection stated above does not exist. It is becoming more and more difficult in the West too for unmarried girls to get husbands.

"Similar is the case with the caste system, and other social customs.

"So, if it be necessary to change any social custom, the *necessity* underlying it should be found out first of all, and by altering it, the custom will die of itself. Otherwise, no good will be done by condemnation or praise.

"(2) Now the question is, is it for the good of the public at large that social rules are framed, or society is formed? Many reply to this in the affirmative; some again may hold that it is not so. Some men, being comparatively powerful, slowly bring all others under their control, and by stratagem, force, or adroitness, gain their own objects. If this be true, what can be the meaning of the statement, that there is danger in giving liberty to the ignorant? What, again, is the meaning of liberty?

"Liberty does not certainly mean the absence of obstacles in the path of misappropriation of wealth, etc., by you and me, but it is our natural right to be allowed to use our own body, intelligence or wealth according to our will, without doing any harm to others; and all the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge. The second question is, those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, *i.e.*, full right to their body, wealth, etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge like those of the rich and highly situated, they would be perverse,—do they say this for the good of the society, or blinded by their selfishness? In England, too, I have heard, 'Who will serve us, if the lower classes get education?'

"For the luxury of a handful of the rich let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education, society will be upset! !

"Who constitute society? The millions, or you, I and a few others of the upper classes?

"Again, even if the latter be true, what ground is there for our vanity that we lead others? Are we omniscient? उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम् 'Raise self by self.' Let each one work out one's own salvation. It is freedom in every way, *i.e.*, advance towards Mukti is the worthiest gain of man. To advance towards freedom, physical, mental and spiritual, and help others to do so is the supreme prize of man. Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious, and steps should be taken to destroy them speedily. Those institutions should be encouraged by which men advance in the path of freedom. . . ."

This letter reveals the many-sidedness of the Swami's character. He was as much a sociologist as a religious teacher.

Among the many important letters that he had received from distinguished Indians during his last stay in Calcutta, the one from the great millionaire-philanthropist of Bombay, Sir Jamsetji N. Tata, is worth quoting here, even though the contents of the Swami's reply to this significant note are not in the hands of the Brotherhood:

"Dear Swami Vivekananda,

"I trust you remember me as a fellow-traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India, and the duty, not of destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

"I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of Research Institute of Science for India, of which you have doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by this spirit, where they should live with ordinary decency, and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences—natural and humanistic. I am of opinion that if such a crusade in favour of an asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science, and the good name of our common country; and I know not who would make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekananda. Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanising into life our ancient traditions in this respect? Perhaps, you had better begin with a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter. I should cheerfully defray all the expenses of publication.

"With kind regards, I am, dear Swami,

"23rd. November, 1898. Yours faithfully,
"Esplanade House, Bombay. Jamsetji N. Tata"

The Swami remained at Vaidyanath until the last days of January, 1899. On February 3, he is seen once more in the companionship of his Gurubhais and disciples, carrying on the task of training them for the firm establishment of that mission for which he had been born.

The Swami, it must be remembered, was always busy training consciously or unconsciously his Sannyâsin and Brahmachârin disciples in various ways. Now, it would be that they should cook for him,—himself an excellent cook,—or execute his orders with exactitude and promptness. In the way of discipline he was most rigorous and exacting, so that they might learn the greatest accuracy, and following the example of the great Pavhari Baba, concentrate on even the simplest acts of life. In this connection he once said, "He who knows how even to fill a Chillum of tobacco properly, knows also how to meditate. And he who cannot cook well, cannot be a perfect Sannyâsin. Unless cooking is performed with a pure mind and concentration, the food is not palatable. Or, he would train some of the disciples with the design of making them preachers. He would ask them to stand up and speak extempore before him and a group of Sannyâsins and householders. Sometimes, they would be shy, but he would insist, and tell them the story of how Sri Ramakrishna had once given him sound advice as to the overcoming of shyness. "Think," said Sri Ramakrishna, "of the men before you as worms,—as the old proverb runs!" Once warmed up to the subject, the disciples would speak fluently, now on the Upanishads, now on Jnâna or Bhakti, or again on the necessity of Sraddhâ, renunciation, and so forth. He would always encourage them with cheers, or with saying "Well done!" at the end of a speech. Of Swami Suddhananda, he said, "In time he will be an excellent speaker!" Again to the same Swami he said one day, by way of encouragement, being satisfied at one of his works, "You are the beloved son in whom I am pleased." He always used to extol to the highest even the smallest merit of his followers.

A remarkable characteristic of the Swami was, that he made all who were about him feel great and equal to brave or dare anything. Success or failure on their part, would elicit from him nothing but approbation and encouragement; for he judged his Gurubhais and his disciples, not by their actual achievements but by the spirit which actuated them. Enough, if they had dared and done their best! He would throw them into water beyond their depth, figuratively speaking, to make them learn to swim. He had infinite faith in the possibilities of the human soul, and would inspire them with a fire and an eloquence which were simply irresistible. He told them that they were as capable of inspiration as he himself. He could see an atom of goodness in the disciple magnified to a mountain, and the mountains of faults and failings but as mere atoms! In such a relationship, every word spoken, every thought, every act attempted or accomplished, every purpose grasped or uncomprehended, became charged with power and vision. Such was the spirit in the Math in those days.

The internal affairs of the Math were perfectly organised by Swami Saradananda, who had been called back from America by the Swami especially for that purpose. Even though he knew that the former was just at the height of his usefulness and possibilities there, he thought it a greater and more urgent duty to have the work of the headquarters organised and some of the younger members trained for the life of the preacher, by one who had made himself acquainted with Western needs and temperaments, and with Western methods of organisation. Besides, he knew that the work in America would not suffer; for Swami Abhedananda was working there with untiring zeal and surprising success. Since his arrival at the Math at the beginning of February 1898, Swami Saradananda gave himself up to his task with great devotion. Everything went on like clock-work and with great enthusiasm. Question-classes and classes for the study of the Sanskrit language and of Eastern and Western philosophies were conducted regularly by him and by Swami Turiyananda, and meditation classes were held daily. The business part of the Math was entrusted to the younger members. This was initiated at the instance of the Swami, as he held that unless they were given independence and the right of self-government in their sphere, with responsibilities to shoulder, they would never learn to stand on their own feet and work wholeheartedly for the cause. They formed themselves into a body, electing a superintendent from among themselves for every month, who was responsible for the efficient carrying out of all the daily duties and demands of the Math. On the principle of division of labour the superintendent assigned to every fellow-disciple his duties, had a reserve force to meet emergencies, and allowed some in turn to devote themselves entirely to Tapasyâ. He had to see that all work was done properly and in time, that everything was kept neat and clean and in its place, and that the sick members were nursed, and so on. It was a delight to the Swami to see both before he left the Math in the early part of the year 1898, and after he returned in October, that the organisation of the Math was so satisfactory.

The Swami is seen in these days pre-eminently in his monastic aspect, constantly teaching his disciples the ideals and practice of the monastic life. Gathering them together whenever the mood came upon him, he would instruct them on the duties of their life, impress upon them the responsibilities of the great vow they had taken, and put before them its glories and possibilities. He would often say, "Brahmacharya should be like a burning fire within the veins!" Or, "Remember, the ideal is the freedom of the Soul and service to all." Life of Sannyâsa meant to him, renunciation of the personal for the universal good, till the personal was merged in the impersonal. He made ideals so intensely practical and living that one never thought of them as abstractions. He held that nothing was impossible for one who had faith in himself. He would point out:

> "The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man loses faith in himself, death comes."

"Believe first in yourself and then in God. A handful of strong men will move the world. We need a heart to feel, a brain to conceive, and a strong arm to do the work. Buddha gave himself for the animals. Make yourselves fit agents to work. But it is God who works, not you. One man contains within him the whole universe. One particle of matter has all the energy of the universe at its back. In a conflict between the heart and the brain, follow your heart."

In one of the congregations of disciples the talk drifted to the Adhikârivâda, or the doctrine of special rights and privileges, and the Swami spoke in unmeasured terms against it and the evils that have resulted from it. He said, that the highest truths should be given to one and all alike without any distinction. His disciples should be bold enough to give out the truth unequivocally and fearlessly without caring for the prevailing customs of the people and of the country.

"No compromise! No whitewashing!" he cried out, "No covering of corpses with flowers! . . . This attempt at compromise proceeds from arrant, downright cowardice. Be bold! My children should be brave, above all. Not the least compromise on any account. Preach the highest truths broadcast. Do not be afraid of losing your respect, or of causing unhappy friction. Rest assured that if you serve Truth in spite of temptations to forsake It, you will attain a heavenly strength, in the face of which men will quail to speak before you things which you do not believe to be true. People would be convinced by what you say to them, if you can strictly serve Truth for fourteen years continually, without swerving from It. Thus you will confer the greatest blessing on the masses, unshackle their bondages and uplift the whole nation."

Or quoting Bhartrihari he would exclaim: "Let sages praise thee, or let the world blame. Let fortune itself come, or let poverty and rags stare thee in the face. Eat the herbs of the forest, one day, for food; and the next day, share a banquet of fifty courses. Looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, follow thou on!"

Again and again he would say that only a great monk can be a great worker. "Only the unimpassioned and unattached do most for the world" he would say. "Who can claim to be a greater worker than Buddha or Christ?" In the Swami's eyes there was no work which was secular. All work was sacred. All work was worship. "We must combine the practicality and the culture of the finest citizenship with the love of poverty, purity and thorough renunciation that characterise the true monk and man of God!"

In discussing the character of service which the monks should take up, he would speak of the feeding of the poor, relief in times of famine, nursing the sick, directing the sanitation of an infected town, founding orphanages and hospitals and centres of education and training,—all of which have since become integral elements in the work and life of the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission. In the monastery itself, besides leading the spiritual and intellectual life, they were also to acquaint themselves, theoretically and practically, with music, gardening, the keeping of animals, and so forth. And he himself, setting an example, would often experiment in the sinking of a well or cooking and baking, or teaching them choral singing. He would insist on physical exercise, saying, "I want sappers and miners in the army of religion! So, boys, set yourselves to the task of training your muscles! For ascetics, mortification is all right! For workers, well-developed bodies, muscles of iron and nerves of steel!" Study, also, was required in order that the monks might, through their learning, develop well-reasoned judgment on the adjustment between the social and spiritual needs of the times and the best way to bring about an exchange of the highest ideals between the East and the West.

The Swami was never tired of impressing upon the minds of his monastic disciples that renunciation with unbroken Brahmacharya was the only key to Illumination, to the realisation of the Highest. The life of the monk was a continuous struggle, a warfare with the internal nature. As such, he must practise intense Tapasyâ, self-control and concentration if he aspired to victory. Nothing pleased him so much as to see some one of them devoting himself to austerities and meditation in solitude. Once he turned fiercely upon someone, who had put to him a worldly question, with the remark, "Go and perform Tapasyâ for some time in order to purify your mind, and then you will not ask such perverse questions!"

The Swami insisted that in their preparatory stage his disciples must submit themselves to strict discipline, and scrupulously observe the regulations about food and other external restrictions enjoined on the Brahmachârins. On the night of December 16, before he left for Vaidyanath, he held a long meeting at the monastery, in which he gave instructions to the younger members concerning the regulation of food, and particularly about eating sparingly at night. Knowing the importance of the action of food on the mind, he said, "Without control over food the control of the mind is impossible. Over-eating causes much evil. Both body and mind are ruined by over-eating!" In their state of spiritual development they were not to eat food touched by non-Hindus. In this preparatory stage they should have Nishthâ without being narrow-minded and bigoted. They should keep firmly to the life of Brahmàcharya. But if, at any time, they found themselves unable to adhere to the high ideals and rigorous discipline of Sannyâsa, they should be free to return to the householder's life. This was a much more desirable and manly step than to lead a hypocritical life and bring degradation on themselves and disgrace to the Order. They were to rise early, meditate and perform their religious duties systematically, and be particularly mindful of Tapasyâ. They should take special care of their health, and be punctual as to the time of meals and other personal necessities. Their conversation at all times should be on religious subjects. As in Western monasteries, they were not even to read newspapers during a certain period of their training. They were not to mix freely with householders. On this point, charging them, one day in the month of May, in a fever of monastic passion, he exclaimed:

"The men of the world should have no voice in the affairs of the Math. The Sannyâsin should have nothing to do with the rich, his duty is with the poor. He should treat the poor with loving care, and serve them joyfully with all his might. To pay respects to the rich and hang on to them for support, has been the bane of all the monastic communities of our country. A true Sannyâsin should scrupulously avoid that. Such a conduct becomes a public woman rather than one who professes to have renounced the world. How should a man immersed in Kâma-Kânchana (lust and greed), become a true devotee of one whose central ideal was the renunciation of Kâma-Kânchana? Sri Ramakrishna wept and prayed to the Divine Mother to send him such a one to talk with, as would not have in him the slightest tinge of Kâma-Kânchana, for he would say, 'My lips burn when I talk with the worldly-minded.' He also used to say that he could not even bear the touch of the worldly-minded and the impure. That King of Sannyâsins can never be preached by men of the world. The latter can never be perfectly sincere, for they cannot but have some selfish motives to serve. If God incarnates Himself as a householder, I can never believe Him to be sincere. When a householder takes the position of the leader of a religious sect, he begins to serve his own interests in the name of principle, hiding the former in the garb of the latter, and the result is, that the sect becomes in time rotten to the core. All religious movements headed by householders have shared the same fate. Without renunciation religion can never stand."

After his return from Vaidyanath the Swami framed certain rules for his young disciples in order to guard them from the least touch of worldliness, or contact with worldly-minded people. The latter should not, out of familiarity, sit or lie on the Sâdhus' beds, or sit at meals with them, and so on. To a disciple he said:

> "Nowadays I feel a sort of disagreeable smell of lust in the bodies and clothes of worldly people. I had read of it in the Sâstras and now I find why it is that men of purity and renunciation cannot bear the touch or the association of the worldly-minded. With right rigour and wisdom the Sâstras enjoin Brahmachârins to remain absolutely aloof from not only women but also even from those who associate with women. When the Brahmachârins become firmly established in the ideals of Sannyâsa, there is no harm in their mixing with householders."

But it is not to be supposed from the above, that the Swami was a hater of householders or of women. He would not allow the younger members of the Math to live even in the Holy Mother's retreat in Calcutta for the purpose of serving her,—whom he adored as greatly as he did Sri Ramakrishna,—just because it was like a women's Math where women-devotees lived and many ladies came to pay their respects to the Holy Mother and to be taught by her. There was the instance of his rating a young Brahmachârin of blameless character, whom he found there after returning from Kashmir, and of his appointing an aged but energetic disciple in his place.

The Swami was not blind to the great virtues and ideals of the householder's life, and he counted among his best friends men and women, whose lives he held up as examples even to his monastic followers. He would often say, "I understand the greatness of the ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and serve, eager to earn righteously and spend benevolently and ever striving to order his life after a spiritual ideal. Marriage may be the path, in fact, the only path, for certain souls, but he who has adopted the monastic life should know that everything in the world is fraught with fear. Renunciation alone can make one fearless. My boys, you must appropriate the greatness of the householder's ideal.

"Our ideal of service to the world must be like that of the householder as taught in the parable of the birds. On seeing that two weary travellers, who had come beneath the forest tree in which they rested, had nothing to eat, the birds cast themselves into the fire lighted by the travellers in order to furnish them with food, because they thought that it was their duty as householders to do so." Teaching the members of the Order in this way he infused into them a spirit, in which the highest service was made one with the highest of meditation.

Sometimes in a mood of remonstrance he would exclaim, "Say, what work shall I do in your country! Everyone here wants to lead, and none to obey. In the doing of great works, the commands of the leader have to be implicitly obeyed. If my Gurubhais tell me now that I have to pass the rest of my life in cleansing the drain of the Math, know, for certain, that I shall obey that order without a word of protest. He only can be a great commander who knows how to obey, without a word of murmur, that which is for the general good." One is reminded here of that same readiness and utter self-abandonment in obedience, which the founders of the Western monastic orders demanded of their followers. To order the planting of cabbages with the heads downwards, or to remove a heap of stones from one place to another and then back again, as many times as ordered without asking the reason why, was one of Saint Francis of Assisi's methods of testing his disciples. The will of the individual must be trained; only in that way, the Swami held, could the strength of a monastic organisation be maintained.

The Swami was sometimes tempted to give way to despair and think his life a failure, since there did not come to him "Two thousand enthusiastic youths" to be trained as Sannyâsin workers ready to give their lives for the spiritual regeneration of their motherland,—and the "Three hundred million rupees," for, he used to say, that with these at his command, he could solve all of India's problems and set her on her feet! "However," he said, "I will do the very best myself, and infuse my spirit in others to continue the work. No rest for me! I shall die in harness! I love action! Life is a battle, and one must always be in action, to use a military phrase. Let me live and die in action!"

One evening, while pacing to and fro, restless with the greatness of his thought, he suddenly stopped and exclaimed to a Sannyâsin disciple: "Listen, my boy! Sri Ramakrishna came and gave his life for the world; I also will sacrifice my life; you also, every one of you, should do the same. All these works are only a beginning. Believe me, from the shedding of our life-blood will arise gigantic heroes and warriors of God, who will revolutionise the whole world!" And he would often charge his disciples with the words, "Never forget, service to the world and the realisation of God are the ideals of the monk! Stick to them! The monastic is the most immediate of paths! Between the monk and his God there are no idols! 'The Sannyâsin stands on the head of the Vedas!' say the Vedas, for he is free from churches and sects and religions and prophets and scriptures!

He is the visible God on earth! Remember this, and go thou thy way, Sannyâsin bold, carrying the banner of renunciation,—the banner of peace, of freedom, of blessedness.''

When the Swami returned to Calcutta he used to live sometimes in the new monastery and sometimes at Balaram Babu's house. Though his health was still broken, he came with new plans and an invigorated spirit. Vaidyanath had done him some good inasmuch as it had given him rest. The very day after his return he held a meeting of his brother-monks, telling them that they must now be prepared to go forth, as did the followers of Buddha, and preach the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna to the people of India. Accordingly, that very day he called Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda, his disciples, and instructed them to proceed at once to Dacca in Eastern Bengal. The former of them humbly protested, saying, "Swamiji, what shall I preach, I know nothing!" "Then, go and preach that!" exclaimed the Swami. "That in itself is a great message!" But the disciple, still unconvinced, prayed that he might be allowed to practise further Sâdhanâs and attain Realisation first, for his own salvation. The Swami thereupon thundered at him saying, "You will go to hell if you seek your own salvation! Seek the salvation of others if you want to reach the Highest! Kill out the desire for personal Mukti! That is the greatest of all Sâdhanâs." And he added sweetly, "Work, my children, work with your whole heart and soul! That is the thing. Mind not the fruits of work. What if you go to hell itself working for others? That is better than winning heaven through self-sought salvation!" Afterwards he called these two disciples, bidding them to come into the worship-room of the monastery. The three sat in meditation, the Swami entering the deeper states thereof. Then, he solemnly said, "Now I shall infuse my Sakti, my Power into you! The Lord Himself shall be at your back!" That whole day he was most loving to these two disciples, and gave them private instructions concerning what they should preach and what Mantras they should give to such as might desire to be initiated. Thus specially blessed by their Guru, they left for Dacca on February 4. The Swami, moreover, commissioned two of his Gurubhais, Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda, to preach in Guzerat, and they set out on their journey three days later.

It was the Swami's great desire that the Vedas and other Sâstras should be studied at the Math. From the time the monastery was removed to Nilambar Mukherjee's Garden, he had started with the help of his Gurubhais regular classes on the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Vedânta Sutras, the Gita, the Bhâgavata and other scriptures, and had himself taught for a time Panini's Ashtâdhyâyi. Now he busied himself with a comprehensive study of Sanskrit scriptures and literature. And it was in these days that he composed his two great Sanskrit poems on Sri Ramakrishna, one of which is now daily sung at the Arati, evening service, at the Ramakrishna monasteries.

During this period many came from far and near to see the Swami, and constant discussion on religion and philosophy and on the ways and means of material and national improvement went on, recalling the days at Seal's Garden. But the most memorable was the visit of Nâg Mahasaya, who came all the way from his distant village-home at Deobhog, in the district of Dacca, to the new Math. It was like the coming together of two great forces, one representing the highest type of the ancient householder's ideal and the other, the ideal of a new type of monasticism,—one mad with God-intoxication, the other intoxicated with the idea of bringing out the Divine in man,—but both one in the vision of Sannyâsa and Realisation! An account of the meeting will convey to the reader some idea of their mutual appreciation.

After saluting each other Nag Mahasaya exclaimed, "Jaya Sankara! Blessed am I to see before me the living Siva!" and remained standing before the Swami, with folded hands. On being asked about his health he said, "What is the use of enquiring about a worthless lump of flesh and bones! I feel blissful at seeing Siva Himself!" With these words he fell prostrate before the Swami, who at once raised him up. At this time the Upanishad class was being held. The Swami addressing his disciples said, "Let the class be stopped. Come and see Nag Mahasaya." When all had seated themselves around the great devotee, the Swami said, "Look! He is a householder, but he has no consciousness of whether he has a body or not, of whether the universe exists or not! He is always absorbed in the thought of God! He is a living example of what man becomes when he attains Supreme Bhakti." Turning to Nag Mahasaya he requested him to tell them something of Sri Ramakrishna, but he with his characteristic humility replied: "What shall I say! I am too unworthy to speak of Him! I have only come to purify myself with the sight of Mahâvira who is His complement in the Divine play (Lilâ) of the Lord in His Incarnation as Sri Ramakrishna. Victory be to Him! Victory be to Him!" The Swami remarked, "You have truly known what our Master was; we are only beating about the bush!" Whereupon Nag Mahasaya broke forth in protest, "Pray, do not speak such meaningless words. You are the shadow of Sri Ramakrishna; He and you are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin! Let him see who has the eyes to see!"

After some talk the Swami said to him, "It would be so good if you would come and live at the Math. These boys will have a living example before them to mould their lives after. The great Bhakta replied in a mood of resignation, "I once asked the Master's permission to give up the world. He said, 'Live in the world.' So I am following his command, and come occasionally to be blessed with the sight of you all, his children." Then the following dialogue ensued between them:

Swamiji: "Now my only wish is to awaken the country. This great giantess is as if sleeping, having lost all faith in her own strength,—sleeping, dead to all outward appearance. If we can awaken her once more to the consciousness of her infinite strength in the Sanâtana Dharma, then our Lord and we shall not have been born in vain! Only that one desire remains; Mukti and the like seem like trash before it! Do bless me that I may succeed."

Nag Mahasaya: "The Lord is ever blessing you! Who can check your will? Your will and His are one. Jaya Ramakrishna!"

Swamiji: "Oh, if only I had had a strong body, so needful for work! See, how since my coming back to India, my health is impaired, frustrating all my plans of work. In Europe and America I was so well."

Nag Mahasaya: "Living in a body, as the Master used to say, one has to pay taxes in the shape of disease and affliction. But yours is a chest of gold sovereigns, and so it has to be guarded with vigilant care. Alas, who will do that! Who will understand what it means to the world!"

Swamiji: "Everyone in the Math looks after me with great love and care."

Nag Mahasaya: "Blessed are they that serve you, for thus they are doing good not only to themselves but to the world at large, whether they understand it or not!"

It is impossible to express in writing the manner and the spirit in which Nag Mahasaya spoke these words of appreciation of the Swami. To the outside world they may well appear too fulsome and theatrical, and even blasphemous; but they will strike one, who knew that godly soul, as spontaneous and coming out of his deepest conviction. And those who were present at the meeting, found it difficult to check tears of emotion,—for Nag Mahasaya had the rare power of breathing his thoughts and yearnings, by a few simple words, or even by a mere look, into the soul of his hearers, until the tenderest feeling became living and vibrant!

The four preachers sent out by the Swami did excellent work in the various cities they visited. Everywhere they found great missionary opportunities for the spread of the gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, which appealed directly to all hearts, mainly because of its simplicity and directness. Swamis Virajananda and Prakashananda started, at the earnest desire of the citizens of Dacca, a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission there. Swamis Saradananda and Turiyananda made a tour of the cities in Kathiawar, and were enthusiastically welcomed by devoted admirers of the Swami, whom they found everywhere. By their lectures and talks on Vedânta the Swamis created a profound impression on the minds of the citizens of that distant province. After three months of preaching and teaching the four missionaries returned to the monastery at the call of the Swami who was rejoiced to hear the reports of their success.

It will be interesting to note here how the movement initiated by the Swami in India and abroad, was being carried on by his co-workers whom he had inspired with the ideal of practising and preaching the Vedânta. In doing so, one sees four prominent features which characterised it at the close of the last century. Firstly, the propaganda of the Vedânta by individual Sannyâsins of the Order; secondly, the founding of monastic centres; thirdly, the starting of temporary centres for the relief of distress in times of famine, plague, etc.; and fourthly, the establishment of permanent asylums for orphans.

To recapitulate the ground already covered: We have seen the inauguration of the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, the establishment of the Math in Belur as the permanent headquarters of the Order and its organization on a solid basis, the starting of the centre and the work of preaching by Swami Ramakrishnananda in Madras, the opening of the Girls' School by Sister Nivedita at Calcutta, the sending out of four preachers to Guzerat and Eastern Bengal, and the Vedânta work carried on by Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda in England and America up to the end of 1896. We have mentioned the famine relief operations conducted by Swami Akhandananda in the District of Murshidabad in 1897, and the sanitary work initiated in 1898 in connection with the plague epidemic in Calcutta.

The Ramakrishna Mission held its weekly sittings in Calcutta regularly throughout 1897. Under its auspices public meetings also were held frequently at which Sister Nivedita and Swami Saradananda often delivered lectures. Swami Ramakrishnananda delivered several lectures and ably conducted as many as eleven classes a week in different parts of the city of Madras under the auspices of different societies. He also visited various other cities of the Presidency to carry on the Vedânta work there.

About the middle of 1897, the Swami deputed Swami Sivananda to work in Ceylon, in response to an appeal for a teacher made by the leading Hindu communities to him while he had been there. Besides arousing an interest in the Vedânta philosophy among the Tamil and the Sinhalese population there, the Swami opened classes for the teaching of Râja Yoga and the Gita, the latter of which was attended by several Europeans also. One of them, Mrs. Pickett, to whom he gave the name of Hari Priyâ, was especially trained by him so as to qualify her to teach the Vedânta to Europeans. He sent her with his authority to Australia and New Zealand to prepare the way for a teacher of the Vedânta there. She made a tour of both countries, interested earnest students in her cause and opened classes in Adelaide, S. Victoria and Nelson.

Swami Abhayananda, the first Sannyâsin disciple of Swami Vivekananda in America, after nearly four years of brilliant preaching and teaching in Chicago and other cities, came to India in March 1899, and delivered stirring and learned lectures in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Dacca, Mymensing and Barisal.

The idea and the necessity of starting a monastery in a cool, secluded region of the Himalayas where the East and the West could meet on an equal footing of love and unity, exchange the highest ideals of each, and practise the Advaita philosophy, were much in the Swami's thought. He had written to a friend that this monastery must be about 7,000 feet above sea-level, as he did not want to kill his Western disciples, who would come to work in India for the furtherance of his cause, by forcing on them the Indian mode of living in the fiery heat of the plains. On his tours he had himself looked for a suitable site in the hills in and about Dharmasala, Murree, Srinagar, Dehra-Dun and the town of Almora, but none answered the purpose satisfactorily. At length, when he went to Kashmir, he left the matter in the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, who, in the company of Swami Swarupananda made a tour into the interior of the Almora District, and in the course of an extensive and diligent search, came upon the beautiful estate of Mayavati with its thickly-wooded hills at an elevation of 6,800 feet and fifty miles from Almora and commanding a magnificent view of the snow ranges. They decided it at once to be *the* spot for their cherished scheme of starting the Advaita Ashrama and of finding a permanent home for the *Prabuddha Bharata.* The purchase was promptly made and they came to make it their retreat on March 19, 1899, which happened to be the auspicious birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. The Advaita Ashrama was founded with the heart-felt blessings of the Swami and under his guidance, and the Press was removed thither.

It is not too much to say that the Advaita Ashrama is the most unique of all the institutions started under the inspiration of the Swami, as the following lines which he wrote to the joint-founders of the Ashrama setting forth its ideal and principles, will show:

"In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of man; knowing Him, and therefore the Universe, as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to infinite freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realisation and the practicalisation of the Eternal Truth,—*The Oneness of All Beings*. 'Dependence is misery. Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and in the long run attain to Absolute Freedom.

"Hitherto it has not been possible to preach this Noble Truth entirely free from the settings of dualistic weakness; this alone, we are convinced, explains why it has not been more operative and useful to mankind at large.

"To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

"Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone."

Here there is no external worship of images, pictures or symbols of God, nor any religious ceremony or ritual except the Virajâ Homa—not even the worship of his own Master, which is the central feature in the other monastic centres.

Before he left on his second visit to the West, the Swami in compliance with a request sent four of his disciples to help in the work of the Ashrama. Accordingly, within a week of his departure, Swamis Sachchidananda (senior), Virajananda and Vimalananda, and the Brahmachâri Harendra Nath left the Belur Math to take up enthusiastically their new duties, which were mainly the construction of a building for the monks, road-making and agricultural work and helping in the publication of the journal.

Besides these institutions now firmly established, the three magazines already mentioned, namely, the *Brahmavadin* of Madras, the *Prabuddha Bharata* of Almora, and the *Udbodhan* of Calcutta, started either under the auspices or under the direct control and guidance of the Swami and conducted by his Gurubhais and disciples, did a vast amount of educational work in India and abroad. They spread far and wide his ideas and those of his Master. They brought out, vindicated and interpreted the thoughts and ideals of the ancient Indian sages and philosophers. They published the reports of the various activities of the members of the Order, and also brought out their writings and lectures.

Turning now to the Vedânta movement carried on in the West during the Swami's absence, we notice that Swami Abhedananda who had taken charge of the classes in London continued them ably, and daily added to his own power as a teacher. Owing to the urgent and repeated calls from the Vedânta Society of New York for a Swami to take charge of the centre, he was obliged to leave for America in the latter part of July 1897, after working for some ten months in London, and the classes which he had been conducting had to be temporarily suspended, though the work was never at a standstill. The disciples of the Swami and many other students interested in the Vedânta, continued to meet in small groups and helped each other and themselves by readings, talks and discussions, with unabated zeal, looking forward to Swami Vivekananda's return to them at no distant future.

It is well-nigh impossible to give here a full and systematic account of the wide-spread propaganda carried on by Swamis Saradananda, Abhedananda and Abhayananda in America. These missionaries of the Vedânta successfully carried their gospel through many of the principal States, making their headquarters in Boston, New York and Chicago, and the influential newspapers, often contained eloquent editorials expressive of appreciation of their lectures and admiration for their personalities.

Swami Saradananda, as previously mentioned, was called back by the Swami to help his Indian work, especially in organising the chief monastery at Belur and training the disciples there as preachers for the West. He left New York for India on January 12, 1898, after about two years of incessant preaching.

Swami Abhedananda visited many cities of the U. S. A., delivering lectures and holding regular classes. He then established himself in New York, where he opened regular classes on Yoga and meditation, which were attended by earnest students.

To an occasional attendant at his classes the growth of interest was unmistakable in steadily increasing audiences of intelligent persons, many of them members of orthodox churches, with a representation of well-known persons in public life.

During this first period of his work, the Swami Abhedananda met many representative thinkers in the world of art, science and religion, both in private life and in social gatherings, and by his unfailing courtesy and readiness in answering questions he awakened their friendly interest in his mission and teachings. One of the most liberal and enlightened of New York clergymen even went so far as to distribute the Swami's lecture programmes among his congregation, advising them to go and listen to his teachings.

The Swami had delivered eighty-six lectures in Mott's Memorial Hall alone. As the foregoing will show, he made a splendid record of arduous work well done, and secured the lasting esteem of all who had come within the sphere of his influence. Several of the best journals of the State, such as *The Sun, The*

New York Tribune, The Critic, The Literary Digest, The Times, The Intelligence, and *The Mind,* published throughout appreciative accounts of his teaching and his personality.

On Easter Sunday, Swami Abhedananda initiated four Brahmachârins. During the summer he left New York to visit Worcester, Boston, Cambridge and other New England points and met many able and influential persons. Among others were Mr. Edison, the great inventor; Joseph Jefferson, the famous actor; William Dean Howells, the novelist; and professors in Cornell, Iowa, Yale and other universities.

No less active was Swami Abhayananda in preaching the gospel of the Vedânta in the United States, with her characteristic zeal and energy. Within four weeks the power of her teaching had been so strongly felt that men and women of intelligence and of high social standing gathered round her, and urged upon her to establish herself at Chicago. She accordingly founded the Advaita Society.

Thus one sees that the seeds sown by Swami Vivekananda on the American soil went on growing vigorously as days passed, striking their roots deep down into the heart of the nation. "It will be impossible to tell," wrote a friend, "how many will look back in after years to the teachings of the Swamis as a turning-point in their lives." In these six years one sees the growing influence of Oriental philosophy in America in the subjects comprised in courses of lectures, in sermons preached in some of the best known churches, in the publication of an increasing number of metaphysical and philosophical magazines, and in the rise of "New Thought" Societies,—all setting forth the principles and practices of the Vedânta, under many names and in various ways. Thus, when the Swami left the shores of India the second time for the West, he did it with a satisfying consciousness of an ever-brightening prospect opening up before him. And though his visit was intended to be chiefly in search of health, he was again hurled into the vortex of intense activity, for preaching and teaching was as vital a part of his life as the air he breathed.

Let us also turn our attention to another sphere of activity, which, though humble, is not a less important factor of the movement—the various humanitarian works undertaken by the Brotherhood to alleviate the wants and miseries of suffering humanity in India, starting with Bengal as a nucleus.

Swami Akhandananda fired by the enthusiastic words of the Leader did much educational work in Khetri. Through his activities the number on the role in the local school increased immensely and the staff and quality of teaching also improved. At that time the system of slavery was in vogue in Rajputana. At the earnest endeavours of Swami Akhandananda many slave boys were made free and proper arrangements were made for their education.

But Swami Akhandananda's activities were not confined to the town alone. Going about from village to village he established five Lower Primary Schools. Shortly after, at the advice of Swami Vivekananda, and satisfied with seeing the uniform progress of these schools, the Maharaja of Khetri sanctioned from the revenue of his State, an additional annual grant of rupees five thousand for the education department. The local Sanskrit School was also, by the Swami's effort, converted into a Vedic School for teaching Yajur Veda.

Some time after, in 1895, the Swami went to Nathdwara in Udaipur State for a brief stay, and there also after much labour started a Middle English

School, and managed to conduct it for a time, thanks to the help of an educated Bengalee youth. Besides these he established in Alwar and other States in Rajputana several associations for the culture of knowledge, in which religion, various branches of learning and many other subjects pertaining to the welfare of the people were discussed.

Allusion has been māde elsewhere to the famine relief work conducted by Swami Akhaṇdananda in the District of Murshidabad with his exemplary zeal and self-sacrifice, which drew from the Government authorities praise and cordial co-operation. Moved by the helpless condition of deserted children in the course of his wanderings through affected villages, the Swami conceived the idea of starting an orphanage and began his work with two little orphans in August 1897, at Mohula, the centre of his relief work. At the beginning of 1899, it was removed to Sargachi. The number of boys increased gradually as days passed. Besides feeding, nursing and housing them, he devoted his energy to educating them in various arts of usefulness, manual and intellectual, and training them morally and spiritually, so that they might be helpful to themselves and to others,—in short, to make *men* of them, in the full sense of the word. Within two years of its inception he made, with the limited funds at his disposal, proper arrangements for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic in elementary English and the vernacular. Orphans of any creed and caste were welcome, and they were given full freedom to keep to their respective faiths and religious practices. Swami Akhandananda has ever since pushed on boldly with his self-imposed task, fighting against untold difficulties and hardships, with his health shattered under the strain. Suffice it to say here, that if Swami Vivekananda was the moving spirit and inspirer of the ideal of service to fellow-men among the Brotherhood, it was Swami Akhandananda who was the first and foremost to take it up and carry it out into practice.

Another famine relief centre was opened in August 1897 at Dinajpur, where several deaths had occurred from starvation, under the management of Swami Trigunatita, on a plan similar to that at Murshidabad. He extended his help within two months to no less than eighty-four villages. His untiring and disinterested services attracted the attention of the Government, and the privilege accorded to Swami Akhandananda of obtaining rice at a much reduced price was also extended to him. The following extract from the Official Report will show how the Swami's work was appreciated by the Government:

> "I cannot close my report without referring to the good work done by Swami Trigunatita, a member of the Ramakrishna Mission. . . . Here the Swami took up his abode in great discomfort, and distributed rice gratis to deserving cases. He made every endeavour to arrive at the truth and as far as he was able, made personal enquiries into the cases. He subsequently gave some relief in Dinajpur town itself. . . . Relief was given irrespective of caste and creed. . . . I would add that the Swami managed the whole work himself without the assistance of myself or anyone else. . . ."

At the end of the work a public meeting was convened on December 3, 1897 by the leading residents of the town to present an address of thanks to Swami Trigunatita. The President thanked the Swami and said among other things:

> ". . . . I fully realise the Swami's good and disinterested work. He had nothing to bind him to this district. His only object was to do good to mankind. . . . He did not depend on the officials for help, neither did he work in opposition to them. The Swami did everything himself and with his own hands.

This is the secret of success in Self-Government. Self-Government consists in having work done and not having meetings only. . . . If we had more such men, I must say, we shall have more Self-Government. . . . I am glad to preside at this meeting, because though it is a small beginning, yet it is a beginning of self-help in the right line. If there is the germ, it may grow up in time."

After the President had read the address of thanks, Swami Trigunatita rose and spoke in reply very eloquently for two hours, dealing with the cause and remedy of famine. His lecture was much appreciated.

A third relief centre was opened at Deoghur by Swami Virajananda, about the same time and on the same lines as the others. Besides these, centres of relief were also opened at Dakshineswar and Calcutta. It is a noteworthy fact in connection with the famine relief work, that the friends and disciples of the Swamis in England and America were so much moved with the descriptions of the heart-rending distress that they convened meetings and sent liberal donations.

Mention has been made of the plans devised and arrangements completed by the Swami himself when the epidemic of the bubonic plague first broke out in Calcutta in May 1898, and when the panic-stricken people were fleeing the city. It was a Sannyâsin clad in loin cloth who thought of their welfare then.

When the plague appeared in Calcutta again the next year, the Ramakrishna Mission plague service was promptly instituted on March 31, under the Swami's instructions, and did considerable work in a well-organised way. He himself went to live in the slums to inspire courage in the people and cheer up the workers. The whole management was placed in the hands of Sister Nivedita as Secretary, and Swami Sadananda as the officer-in-chief with

Swamis Sivananda, Nityananda and Atmananda as assistants. Bustees, or poor quarters, in four of the districts of the city were cleared of cartloads of filth and congested matter and thoroughly disinfected with the help of scavengers under the direct supervision of the Swamis.

A movement of a permanent value among the students was inaugurated by the stirring words of Swami Vivekananda from the chair, on the occasion of Sister Nivedita's address on "The Plague and the Duty of the Students," at the public meeting held in the Classic Theatre on April 21. Fifteen students volunteered for service. They were formed into a band of helpers, for door-to-door inspection of huts in selected Bustees, for the distribution of sanitary literature, and for speaking words of counsel. They used to meet on Sundays at the Ramakrishna Mission, to submit reports of their work to Sister Nivedita, and to receive instructions from her until the epidemic subsided.

Another institution which grew at once into public favour and into huge proportions as a national festival after the return of the Swami to India from the West, was the celebration of the birthday anniversary of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Barring the religious significance and features of the festival, thousands of the poor were fed, not only at the headquarters but in all the branch centres of the Order in the different provinces.

This, in brief, is the record of public service done within two years and a half by the Ramakrishna Mission and the Brotherhood under the inspiration and guiding genius of Swami Vivekananda. The value of this kind of service is not to be gauged so much by the actual amount of work done, great though it was, as by the spirit of service and fellowship, of co-operation and unity infused into others to thrive and grow with ever-increasing force.

In those days when famine raged with all its horrors, the dominating thought with the Swami was of the poor and miserable victims. The cry of the distressed seemed to transfix his heart. All those who heard him talk during these days on the ways and means of alleviating the sad lot of the masses, felt in their inmost soul his love for his country and his sympathy for his countrymen.

Once Pandit Sakharam Ganes Deuskar, the late revered editor of the *Hitavâdi,* came to see the Swami with two of his friends. Learning that one of them came from the Punjab, the Swami entered into conversation with him on the needs of that province, especially about the scarcity of food that was then prevailing there, and how that had to be met. The talk drifted on to our duty to the masses in providing them with educational facilities for the betterment of their material and social conditions, and other allied subjects. Before taking leave the Punjabi gentleman expressed his regret courteously, "Sir, with great expectations of hearing various teachings on religion we came to see you. But unfortunately our conversation turned on commonplace matters. The day has passed in vain!" The Swami became at once grave and solemn and said, "Sir, so long as even a dog of my country remains without food, to feed and take care of him is my religion, and anything else is either non-religion or false religion!" All the three visitors were struck dumb by the Swami's reply. Years after the passing of the Swami, Mr. Deuskar in relating the incident to a disciple, told him that those words burnt into his soul making him realise, as never he had done before, what true patriotism was.

It was about the same time also that a Pandit of the Upper Provinces came to the Swami to argue with him on the Vedânta philosophy. The Swami was then sorely depressed at his helplessness in coping with the wide-spread famine. Without giving the Pandit any opportunity to discuss the Sâstras, he said, "Panditji, first of all try to ameliorate the terrible distress that is prevailing everywhere, to still the heart-rending cry of your hungry countrymen for a morsel of food; after that come to me to have a debate on the Vedânta. To stake one's whole life and soul to save thousands who are dying of starvation—this is the essence of the religion of the Vedânta!"

"Verily, the austerities and self-tortures of the Hatha Yoga," as a lecturer has said, "pale into insignificance before the higher and nobler way shown to us by the great Swami Vivekananda—this laying down of our lives as a sacrifice on the altar of humanity."

As early as December 16, the Swami had announced his intention of going to the West. And now with the approach of summer he was urged by his friends and physicians to do so at once as his health was in the balance. He himself wrote to an American disciple on April 11: "Two years of physical suffering have taken away twenty years from my life. Well, but the soul changeth not, does it? It is there, the same madcap—Atman—mad upon one idea, intent and intense." The sea voyage, it was thought, would do him good. It was finally decided that he would sail from Prinsep's Ghat, Calcutta, on June 20, and that Swami Turiyananda as also Sister Nivedita who was sailing for England in the interest of her Girls' School, would accompany him.

Swami Turiyananda was held in great love and reverence by the Brotherhood for his austere life of Brahmacharya from his very boyhood, for his spirit of burning renunciation and his highly developed spiritual nature. Versed in Sanskrit and an adept in meditation, he had from the days of the Alambazar Math trained the younger members of the monastery, by holding classes and talks and, above all, by his exemplary life. When it was proposed that he would accompany the Swami to America, he expressed the desire of taking with him some standard works on the Vedânta philosophy in Sanskrit, for help and reference. The Swami exclaimed: "Oh, learning and books they have had enough! They have seen the Kshattra power,—now I want to show them the Brâhmana!" He meant that in himself the West had seen the combative spirit and energy in the defence of the Sanâtana Dharma; and now the time had come when the people of the antipodes should have before them the example of a man of meditation in his Gurubhai, born and bred in the best traditions and rigorous disciplines of Brâhmanhood.

Swami Turiyananda as a man of meditation was averse from public life. The Swami had tried hard to persuade him to come into the arena, but in vain. At last one day, in Darjeeling, when all argument had failed, the Swami put his arms round his Gurubhai's neck and laying his head against his breast, wept like a child, saying, "Dear Haribhai, can't you see me laying down my life, inch by inch, in fulfilling this mission of my Master, till I have come to the verge of death! Can you look on without helping by relieving me of a part of my great burden?" The Gurubhai was overpowered. All hesitation vanished. Then and there he pledged himself to do unflinchingly the Swami's bidding. So it was that he took the work in the West as the will of the Mother and resigned himself wholly to the task.

On the night of the nineteenth, a formal meeting was held at the monastery, at which the junior members presented their Superior with a parting address, as they did also to Swami Turiyananda who gave a brief reply. The Swami's own reply took the form of a short lecture on "Sannyâsa: Its Ideal and Practice," in which he insisted upon the Sannyâsin's love of death, that is to say, holding one's life as a sacrifice to the world, because then all actions would be performed selflessly and with a view to do good to others. Too high and impossible an ideal was wrong. That had been the trouble with the Buddhist and Jain reformers. Too much practicality was also wrong. The two extremes must be avoided. "You must try to combine in your life immense idealism with immense practicality. You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now, and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields (pointing to the meadows of the Math) You must be prepared to explain the intricacies of the Sâstras now, and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the fields in the market. . . ." They must remember that the aim of the monastery was Man-making. They themselves must be Rishis. "The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and yet possesses a woman's heart." They must have a deep regard for their Sangha (the Order) and be implicitly obedient. Having given them this final instruction the Swami, gazing lovingly, as a father upon his children, blessed them.

On the day of departure, the Holy Mother gave a sumptuous feast at her Calcutta house to the Swami and Swami Turiyananda and to all her Sannyâsin children of the Math. Receiving her blessings, the two Gurubhais left in the afternoon for Prinsep's Ghat, where they found numerous friends assembled to bid them and Sister Nivedita farewell. The Swami was in the best of spirits and bade them all to be of good cheer. Needless to say that there was much sadness and everyone was visibly moved when the time for final greetings came, but the Swami, they knew, was always with them at heart.

XXXV

SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA

On June 20, 1899, the Swami boarded the steamer *Golconda* and was off for the West. In the Bay of Bengal the sea was exceedingly rough. On the twenty-fourth the ship touched at Madras. Here a great crowd was waiting, for the news of the Swami's coming had been telegraphed on, but on account of plague in Calcutta, the Indian passengers were not allowed to land. This was a great disappointment to the whole city.

Old friends and disciples of the Swami, as also Swami Ramakrishnananda and others came in boats alongside the steamer, bringing fruits, flowers and other offerings to the Swami, who greeted them from the railing and talked to them until fatigue overcame him. Alasingha Perumal, that devoted worker, was especially anxious to consult the Swami concerning the management of the *Brahmavâdin* magazine, and for this reason he purchased a ticket to Colombo.

At Colombo the Swami received a great ovation. He was glad to see his old friends again, among whom were Sir Coomaraswamy and Mr. Arunachalam. He visited Mrs. Higgin's Boarding School for Buddhist girls, and also the convent and school of his old acquaintance, the Countess Canovara.

The steamer left Colombo on the morning of June 28. It was monsoon time and the ship tossed heavily all the way to Aden, which was reached in ten instead of the usual six days. At Socotra, the monsoon was fiercest, this being its very centre, as the Captain remarked to the Swami. Beyond this point the sea was comparatively calm. The steamer reached Aden on July 8, and Suez, through the Red Sea and the Suez canal, on the fourteenth. After touching at Naples, it went on to Marseilles, and the Swami was in London on July 31.

For the Sister and the Swami's Gurubhai, this voyage was a pilgrimage and an education. Sister Nivedita has recorded in her charming style, in *The Master As I Saw Him,* some of the striking conversations of the Swami from her diary, and her impressions. These being of absorbing interest to the readers of the Swami's life, as they show the Master in varying moods, the biographers need make no apology for making the following quotations from them. Writes the Sister:

> "From the beginning of the voyage to the end, the flow of thought and story went on. One never knew what moment would see the flash of intuition, and hear the ringing utterance of some fresh truth. It was while we sat chatting in the River on the first afternoon that he suddenly exclaimed, 'Yes! the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale!' And these words link themselves in my memory with those of another day, when I had been reminding him of the rareness of criminality in India. And he turned on me, full of sorrowful protest. 'Would to God it were otherwise in my land!' he said, 'for this is verily the virtuousness of death!' Stories of the Sivarâtri, or Dark Night of Siva, of Prithvi Rai, of the Judgment-seat of Vikramaditya, of Buddha and Yashodhara, and a thousand more were constantly coming up. And a noticeable point was that one never heard the same thing twice. There was the perpetual study of caste; the constant examination and restatement of ideas; the talk of work, past, present, and future; and, above all, the vindication of Humanity, never abandoned, never weakened, always rising to new heights of defence of the undefended, of chivalry for the weak. . . .
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> "I cannot forget his indignation when he heard some European reference to cannibalism, as if it were a normal part of life in some societies. 'That is not true!' he said, when he had heard to the end. 'No nation ever ate human flesh, save

as a religious sacrifice, or in war, out of revenge. Don't you see? That is not the way of gregarious animals! It would cut at the roots of social life!' Kropotkin's great work on 'Mutual Aid' had not yet appeared, when these words were said. It was his love of Humanity, and his instinct on behalf of each in his own place, that gave to the Swami so clear an insight.

"Again he talked of religious impulse. 'Sex-love and creation!' he cried, 'These are at the root of most religion. And these in India are called Vaishnavism, and in the West Christianity. How few have dared to worship Death, or Kali! Let us worship Death! Let us embrace the Terrible, because it is terrible; not asking that it be toned down. Let us take misery, for misery's own sake!'

"As we came to the place where the river-water met the ocean, . . . the Swami explained how it was the great reverence of Hindus for the ocean, forbidding them to defile it by crossing it, that had made such journeys equal to outcasting for so many centuries. Then, as the ship crossed the line, touching the sea for the first time, he chanted, 'Namo Sivâya! Namo Sivâya!. . .'

"He was talking again of the fact that he who would be great must suffer, and how some were fated to see every joy of. the senses turn to ashes, and he said, 'The whole of life is only a swan-song. . . .'

"Now he would answer a question, with infinite patience, and again he would play with historic and literary speculations. Again and again his mind would return to the Buddhist period, as the *crux* of a real understanding of Indian history.

" 'The three cycles of Buddhism,' he said one day, 'were five hundred years of the Law, five hundred years of images, and five hundred years of Tantras. You must not imagine that there was ever a religion in India called Buddhism, with temples and priests of its own order! Nothing of the sort. It was always within Hinduism. Only at one time the influence of Buddha was paramount, and this made the nation monastic. . . .'

" And he drifted on to talk about the Soma plant, picturing how for a thousand years after the Himalayan period, it was annually received in Indian villages as if it were a king, the people going out to meet it on a given day, and bringing it in rejoicing. And now it cannot even be identified! . . . .

" 'Yes, Buddha was right! It *must* be cause and effect in *Karma*. This individuality cannot but be an illusion!'

It was the next morning, and I had supposed him to be dozing in his chair, when he suddenly exclaimed, ' Why! the memory of one life is like millions of years of confinement, and they want to wake up the memory of many lives! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof!'

" ' I have just been talking to Turiyananda about conservative and liberal ideas,' he said as he met me on deck before breakfast one morning, and straightaway plunged into the subject.

" ' The conservative's whole ideal is *submission.* Your ideal is struggle. Consequently it is *we* who enjoy life, and never you! You are always striving to change yours to something better, and before a millionth part of the change is carried out, you die. The Western ideal is, to be doing: the Eastern, to be suffering. The perfect life would be a wonderful harmony between doing and suffering. But that can never be.

" ' In our system it is accepted that a man can never have all he desires. Life is subjected to many restraints. This is ugly, yet it brings out points of light and strength. Our liberals see only the ugliness, and try to throw it off. But they substitute something quite as bad, and the new custom takes as long as the old, for us to work to its centres of strength.

" ' Will is not strengthened by change. It is weakened and enslaved by it. But we must be always absorbing. Will grows stronger by absorption. And consciously or unconsciously, will is the one thing in the world that we admire. Suttee is great in the eyes of the whole world, because of the will that it manifests.

" ' It is selfishness that we must seek to eliminate! I find that whenever I have made a mistake in my life, it has always been because *self* entered into the calculation. Where self has not been involved, my judgment has gone straight to the mark.

" ' Without this self, there would have been no religious system. If man had not wanted anything for himself, do you think he would have had all this praying and worship? Why! he would never have thought of God at all, except perhaps for a little praise now and then, at the sight of a beautiful landscape or something. And that is the only attitude there ought to be. All praise and thanks. If only we were rid of self!'

" ' You are quite wrong,' he said again, ' when you think that fighting is a sign of growth. It is not so at all. Absorption is the sign. Hinduism is the very genius of absorption. We have never cared for fighting. Of course we struck a blow now and then, in defence of our homes! That was right. But we never cared for fighting for its own sake. Everyone had to learn that. So let these races of new comers whirl on! They'll all be taken into Hinduism in the end!'

"He never thought of his Mother-Church or his Motherland except as dominant; and again and again, when thinking of definite schemes, he would ejaculate, in his whimsical way, 'Yes, it is true! If European men or women are to work in India, it *must* be under the black man!'

"He brooded much over the national achievement. 'Well! Well!' he would say, 'We have done one thing that no other people ever did. We have converted a whole nation to one or two ideas. Non-beef-eating for instance. Not one Hindu eats beef. No, no!'—turning sharply round—'it is not at all like European non-cat-eating; for beef was formerly the food of the country!'

"We were discussing a certain opponent of his own, and I suggested that he was guilty of putting his sect above his country. 'That is Asiatic,' reported the Swami warmly, 'and it is grand! Only he had not the brain to conceive, nor the patience to wait!' and then he went off into a musing on Kali. . . .

"'I love terror for its own sake,' he went on, 'despair for its own sake, misery for its own sake. Fight always. Fight and fight on, though always in defeat. That's the ideal. That's the ideal.'

"'The totality of all souls, not the human alone,' he said once, 'is the Personal God. The will of the Totality nothing can resist. It is what we know as Law. And this is what we mean by Siva and Kali and so on.'

"It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the Straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. 'Messina must thank *me!*' he said, 'It is I who give her all her beauty!'

"Then he talked of the fever of longing to reach God, that had wakened in him as a boy, and of how he would begin repeating a text before sunrise, and remain all day repeating it, without stirring. He was trying here to explain the idea of Tapasyâ, in answer to my questions, and he spoke of the old way of lighting four fires, and sitting in the midst, hour after hour, with the sun overhead, reining in the mind. 'Worship the terrible!' he ended, 'Worship Death! All else is vain. All struggle is vain. That is the last lesson. Yet this is not the coward's love of death, not the love of the weak, or the suicide. It is the welcome of the strong man, who has sounded everything to his depths, and *knows* that there is no alternative.' "

Often during the voyage the Swami talked of those saints whom he had known personally. Paramount was Sri Ramakrishna of whom he told, among many other things, how with but a touch he could impart the highest insight, as instanced in the case of the lad who never spoke the remaining ten years of his life, save to say, "My Beloved! My Beloved!" after being touched by the Master's hand. And he spoke also of a certain woman who on being offered salutation by the Master in the name of the Mother, by throwing flowers on her feet and burning incense before her, passed immediately into the deepest Samâdhi, from which it was most difficult to recall her to sense-consciousness till two or three hours had elapsed. Before she left,

" None had the forethought to make a single enquiry as to her name or abode. She never came again. Thus her memory became like some beautiful legend treasured in the Order as witness to the worship of Sri Ramakrishna for gracious and noble wifehood and motherhood. Had he not said of this woman, 'a fragment of the eternal Madonnahood'? . . . 'Was it a joke,' the Swami said, ' that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa should touch a life? *Of course* he made new men and new women of those who came to him, even in these fleeting contacts!'

" And then he would tell story after story of different disciples. How one came, and came again, and struggled to understand. And suddenly to this one he turned and said, ' Go away now, and make some money! Then come again!' And that man today was succeeding in the world, but the old love was proving itself ever alight."

The Swami spoke with great feeling of Nag Mahasaya, who had paid him a visit in Calcutta only a few weeks before his departure. Nag Mahasaya, he said again and again, was "one of the greatest of the works of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa." He related how on one occasion he had cut down the ridge-pole of his cottage, in order to make the fire to cook food for a guest.

Speaking of the modern saints of Hindusthan, such as Pavhari Baba, Trailanga Swami, Raghunath Das and others, as also of those of ancient times,

" His whole soul went to the interpretation of each, as he rose before him, and it would have been impossible at any moment for the listener to think of any other as higher. . . .

" Raghunath Das had been dead two months, when the Swami reached his Asrama. He had been a soldier originally in the British service, and as an outpost sentinel was faithful and good, and much beloved by his officers. One night, however, he heard a Rama-Rama party. He tried to do his duty, but ' Jaya Bolo Rama Chandra Ki Jaya!' maddened him. He threw away his arms and uniform, and joined the worship.

" This went on for some time, till reports came to the Colonel. He sent for Raghunath Das, and asked him whether these were true, and if he knew the penalty. Yes, he knew it. It was to be shot. ' Well,' said the Colonel, ' go away this time, and I shall repeat it to no one. This once I forgive you. But if the same thing happens again, you must suffer the penalty.'

" That night, however, the sentinel heard again the Rama-Rama party. He did his best, but it was irresistible. At last he threw all to the winds, and joined the worshippers till morning. Meanwhile, however, the Colonel's trust in Raghunath Das had been so great that he found it difficult to believe anything against him, even on his own confession. So in the course of the night, he visited the outpost, to see for himself. Now, Raghunath Das was in his place, and exchanged the word with him three times. Then, being reassured, the Colonel turned in, and went to sleep.

" In the morning appeared Raghunath Das to report himself and surrender his arms. But the report was not accepted, for the Colonel told him what he had himself seen and heard. Thunderstruck, the man insisted by some means on retiring from the service. Rama it was who had done this for His servant. Henceforth, in very truth, he would serve no other.

" 'He became a Vairâgi,' said the Swami, 'on the banks of the Saraswati. People thought him ignorant, but I knew his power. Daily he would feed thousands. Then would come the grain-seller, after a while, with his bill. 'H'm!' Raghunath Das would say, 'A thousand rupees you say? Let me see. It is a month I think since I have received anything. This will come, I fancy, tomorrow.' And it always came. . . .'

" And then, perhaps came the stôry of Sibi Rana. 'Ah, Yes!' exclaimed the teller, as he ended, 'these are the stories that are deep in our nation's heart! Never forget that the Sannyâsin takes two vows, one to realise the truth, and one to help the world, and that the most stringent of stringent requirements is that he should renounce any *thought* of heaven!' "

One day the talk drifted to the question of what becomes of those who failed to keep their vows. Quoting the memorable Slokas of the Gita on the point,

" First he explained how everything, short of the absolute control of mind, word, and deed, was but 'the sowing of wild oats.' Then he told how the religious who failed would sometimes be born again to a throne, 'there to sow his wild oats,' in gratifying the particular desire which had led to his downfall. 'A memory of the religious habit,' he said, 'often haunts the throne.' For one of the signs of greatness was held to be the persistence of a faint memory. Akbar had had this memory. He thought of himself as a Brahmachârin who had failed in his vows. But he would be born again, in more favourable surroundings, and that time he would succeed. And then there came one of those personal glimpses which occurred so seldom with our Master. Carried away by the talk of memory, he lifted the visor for a moment, on his own soul. 'And whatever you may think,' he said, turning to me suddenly, and addressing me by name, 'I have such a memory! . . .'

" His voice sank into silence, and we sat looking out over the star-lit sea. Then he took up the thread again. 'As I grow older I find that I look more and more for greatness in little things. I want to know what a great man eats and wears, and how he speaks to his servants. I want to find a Sir Philip Sidney greatness! Few men would remember the thirst of others, even in the moment of death.'

" 'But anyone will be great in a great position! Even the coward will grow brave in the glare of the footlights. The world looks on. Whose heart will not throb? Whose pulse will not quicken, till he can do his best? More and more the true greatness seems to me that of the worm, doing its duty silently, steadily, from moment to moment, and hour to hour.'

"How many points on the map have received a new beauty in my eyes, from the conversations they recall! As we passed up the coast of Italy, we talked of the Church. As we went through the Straits of Bonifacio, and sat looking at the south coast of Corsica, he spoke in a hushed voice of 'this land of the birth of the War-Lord,' and wandered far afield, to talk of the strength of Robespierre, or to touch on Victor Hugo's contempt for Napoleon III, with his 'Et *tu* Napoleon?'

"As I came on deck, on the morning of our passing through the Straits of Gibraltar, he met me with the words, 'Have you seen them? Have you seen them? Landing there and crying, *'Din! Din!'* 'The Faith! The Faith!' And for half-an-hour I was swept away into his dramatisation of the Moorish invasions of Spain.

"Or again, on a Sunday evening, he would sit and talk of Buddha putting new life into the customary historical recital of bare facts, and interpreting the Great Renunciation as it had appeared to him who made it.

"But his talks were not all entertaining, nor even all educational. Every now and then he would return, with consuming eagerness, to the great purpose of his life. And when he did this, I listened with an anxious mind, striving to treasure up each word that he let fall. For I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dreams.

"One of these occasions came on a certain evening, as we neared Aden. I had asked him, in the morning, to tell me, in broad outline, what he felt to be the points of difference between his own schemes for the good of India, and those preached by others. It was impossible to draw him out on this subject. On the contrary, he expressed appreciation of certain personal characteristics and lines of conduct, adopted by some of the leaders of other schools, and I regarded the question as dismissed. Suddenly, in the evening, he returned to the subject of his own accord.

"'I disagree with all those,' he said, 'who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. *My* hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within.'

" 'So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea—*Strength.* The quintessence of Vedas and Vedânta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was of Non-resistance or Non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now, I will make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness. My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And thou also art He!'

" 'But you may ask—What is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme? He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England, or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life,—and I read the meaning. Never a word of condemnation for any! Once I had been attacking one of our sects of Diabolists. I had been raving on for three hours, and he had listened quietly. 'Well, well!' said the old man as I finished, 'perhaps every house may have a back door. Who knows!'

" 'Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—Renunciation and Mukti. Only Mukti here! Nothing for the householders! But these are the very people whom I want to help. For, are not all souls of the same quality? Is not the goal of all the same?

" 'And so strength must come to the nation through education.'

"I thought at the time, and I think increasingly as I consider it, that this one talk of my Master, had been well worth the whole voyage, to have heard. . . .

"The Swami was constantly preoccupied with the thought of Hinduism as a whole, and this fact found recurring expression in references to Vaishnavism. . . .

"He loved to dwell on the spectacle of the historical emergence of Hinduism. He sought constantly for the great force *behind* the evolution of any given phenomenon. Where was the thinker behind the founder of a religion? And where, on the other hand, was the heart to complete the thought? Buddha had received his philosophy of the five categories—form, feeling, sensation, motion, knowledge,—from Kapila. But Buddha had brought the love that made the philosophy live. Of no one of these, Kapila had said, can anything be declared. For each *is* not. It but was, and is gone. Each is but the ripple on the water. Know, O man! thou art the sea'.

"Krishna, in his turn, as the preacher and creative centre of popular Hinduism, awoke in the Swami a feeling which was scarcely second to his passionate, personal adoration of Buddha. Compared to His many-sidedness, the Sannyâsa of Buddha was almost a weakness. How wonderful was the Gita! . . . . How strong! But besides this, there was the beauty of it. The Gita, after the Buddhist writings, was such a relief! Buddha had constantly said, 'I am for the People!' And they had crushed, in his name, the vanity of art and learning. The great mistake committed by Buddhism lay in the destruction of the old.

"For the Buddhist books were torture to read. Having been written for the ignorant, one would find only one or two thoughts in a huge volume. (The Dhammapada he placed, however, on a level with the Gita). It was to meet the need thus roused, that the Purânas were intended. There had been only one mind in India that had foreseen this need, that of Krishna, probably the greatest man who ever lived. He recognised once the need of the People, and the desirability of preserving all that had already been gained. Nor are the Gopi story and the Gita (which speaks again and again of women and Sudras) the only forms in which he reached the masses. For the whole Mahabharata is his, carried out by his worshippers, and it begins with the declaration that it is for the People.

" 'Thus is created a religion that ends in the worship of Vishnu, as the preservation and enjoyment of life, leading to the realisation of God. Our last movement, Chaitanyaism, you remember, was for enjoyment. (The Swami was characterising the doctrine here; he was not speaking of the unsurpassed personal asceticism of Chaitanya). At the same time, Jainism represents the other extreme, the slow destruction of the body by self-torture. Hence Buddhism, you see, is reformed Jainism, and this is the real meaning of Buddha's leaving the company of the five ascetics. In India, in every age, there is a cycle of sects, which represents every gradation of physical practice, from the extreme of self-torture to the extreme of excess. And during the same period will always be developed a metaphysical cycle, which represents the realisation of God as taking place by every gradation of means, from that of using the senses as an instrument, to that of the annihilation of the senses. Thus Hinduism always consists, as it were, of two counter-spirals, completing each other, round a single axis.

" 'Yes! Vaishnavism says: It is all right! This tremendous love for father, for mother, for brother, husband or child! It is all right, if only you will think that Krishna is the child, and when you give him food, that you are feeding Krishna! This was the cry of Chaitanya. 'Worship God through the senses!' as against that Vedântic cry, 'Control the senses! Suppress the senses!'

" 'At the present moment, we may see three different positions of the national religion—the Orthodox, the Arya Samâj, and the Brahmo Samâj. The orthodox covers the ground taken by the Vedic Hindus of the Mahabharata epoch. The Arya Samâj corresponds with Jainism, and the Brahmo Samâj with the Buddhists.

" 'I see that India is a young and living organism. Europe also is young and living. Neither has arrived at such a stage of development that we can safely criticise its institutions. They are two great experiments, neither of which is yet complete. In India, we have social communism, with the light of Advaita—that is, spiritual individualism—playing on and around it; in Europe, you are socially individualists, but your thought is dualistic, which is spiritual communism. Thus the one consists of social institutions, hedged in by individualistic thought, while the other is made up of individualist institutions, within the hedge of communistic thought.

" 'Now we must help the Indian experiment as it is. Movements which do not attempt to help things as they are, are, from that point of view, no good. In Europe, for instance, I respect marriage as highly as non-marriage. Never forget that a man is made great and perfect as much by his faults as by his virtues. So we must not seek to rob a nation of its character, even if it could be proved that that character was all faults.'

"His mind was extraordinarily clear on the subject of what he meant by individualism. How often has he said to me, 'You do not yet understand India! We Indians are *Man-*

worshippers, after all! Our God is man!' He meant here the great individual man, the man of Self-realisation,—Buddha, Krishna, the Guru, the Mahâpurusha. But on another occasion, using the same word in an entirely different sense, he said, 'This idea of man-worship (that is to say, the worship of the manhood which exists in any man, in all men, apart from their individual achievement of thought or character, humanity) exists in nucleus in India, but it has never been expanded. You must develop it. Make poetry, make art, of it. Establish the worship of the feet of beggars, as you had it in Mediæval Europe. Make man-worshippers.'

"He was equally clear, again, about the value of the image. 'You may always say,' he said, 'that the image is God. The error you have to avoid, is to think God the image.' He was appealed to, on one occasion, to condemn the fetichism of the Hottentot. 'I do not know,' he answered, 'what fetichism is!' A lurid picture was hastily put before him, of the object alternately worshipped, beaten and thanked. '*I* do that!' he exclaimed. 'Don't you see,' he went on, a moment later, in hot resentment of injustice done to the lowly and absent, 'Don't you see that there is no fetichism? Oh, your hearts are steeled, that you cannot see that the child is right! The child sees persons everywhere. Knowledge robs us of the child's vision. But at last, through higher knowledge, we win back to it. He connects a living power with rocks, sticks, trees, and the rest. And is there not a living Power behind them? It is *symbolism,* not fetichism! Can you not see?'

"But while every sincere ejaculation was thus sacred to him, he never forgot for a moment the importance of the philosophy of Hinduism. And he would throw perpetual flashes of poetry into the illustration of such arguments as are known to lawyers. How lovingly he would dwell upon the Mimânsaka philosophy! With what pride he would remind the listener that, according to Hindu *Savants,* 'the whole universe is only *the meaning of words*. After the word comes the thing. Therefore, the idea is all!' And indeed, as he expounded it, the daring of the Mimânsaka argument, the fearlessness of its admissions, and the firmness of its inferences, appeared as the very glory of Hinduism. . . . One day he told the story of Satyabhâmâ sacrifice and how the word 'Krishna,' written on a piece of paper, and thrown into the balances, made Krishna himself, on the other side, kick the beam. 'Orthodox Hinduism,' he began, 'makes Sruti, the sound, everything. The *thing* is but a feeble manifestation of the pre-existing and eternal Idea. So the *name* of God is everything: God Himself is merely the objectification of that idea in the eternal mind. Your own name is infinitely more perfect than the person, you! The name of God is greater than God. Guard you your speech!' Surely there has never been another religious system so fearless of truth! As he talked, one saw that the whole turned on the unspoken conviction, self-apparent to the Oriental mind, that religion is not a creed, but an experience; a process, as the Swami himself has elsewhere said, of being and becoming. If it be true that this process leads inevitably from the apprehension of the manifold to the realisation of the One, then it must also be true that everything is in the mind, and that the material is nothing more than the concretising of ideas. Thus the Greek philosophy of Plato is included within the Hindu philosophy of the Mimânsakas, and a doctrine that sounds merely empiric on the lips of Europe finds reason and necessity, on those of India. In the same way, as one declaring a truth self-evident, he exclaimed, on one occasion, 'I would not worship even the Greek gods, for they were separate from humanity! Only those should be worshipped who are like ourselves, but greater. The difference between the gods and me must be a difference only of degree.'

"But his references to philosophy did not by any means always consist of these epicurean tit-bits. He was merciless, as a rule, in the demand for intellectual effort, and would hold a group of unlearned listeners through an analysis of early systems, for a couple of hours at a stretch, without suspecting them of weariness or difficulty. . . .

"Nor would Western speculations pass forgotten in this great restoration of the path the race had come by. For his was a mind which saw only the seeking, pursuing enquiry of man, making no arbitrary distinction as between ancient and modern. . . ."

In this way he would run over all the six systems of Hindu philosophy, analysing, comparing, reconciling one with the other, and showing their points of difference from Buddhism. Thus he dwelt long and minutely on the Vaiseshika and the Nyâya philosophy in particular, side by side with that of the Vedânta, and of Kant. He concluded by saying:

" One set of persons, you see, gives priority to the external manifestation, the other to the internal ideal. Which is prior, the bird to the egg, or the egg to the bird! Does the oil hold the cup, or the cup the oil? This is a problem of which there is no solution. Give it up! Escape from Mâyâ!"

But the Swami was not occupied all the time with problems; free from the cares of public life, he was often jovial, and gave himself up to fun and merriment with his Gurubhai and his disciple. He enjoyed the long sea-voyage and fulfilled his promise to the editor of the *Udbodhan*, by writing Bengali articles for the paper. These were for the greater part penned in the most delightful and humorous style, interspersed here and there with serious and instructive thoughts, both secular and spiritual. These contributions were later collected and made into a book called, *Parivrâjaka* or "the Itinerant Monk." This is, indeed, from one point of view, a singular production, being in its nature untranslatable keeping to its native spirit, and shows that he could have been the Mark Twain of the Bengali literature if he had so wished.

Thus passed the time, until on July 31, the party arrived in London, to be met on landing at the Tilbury Dock by many friends and disciples of the Swami. Among them were, much to his surprise, two American ladies who had come all the way from Detroit to meet him in London, having seen in an Indian magazine that he would sail from India on June 20, and especially because they were alarmed at the reports they had heard regarding his health. One of these, Mrs. Funke, describing his appearance, says: "He had grown very slim and looked and acted like a boy. He was so happy to find that the voyage had brought back some of the old strength and vigour."

It being the off-season period in London, the

Swami remained but two weeks in Wimbledon, a suburb of the metropolis, where quarters were found in a roomy old-fashioned house. It was very quiet and restful, and all spent a happy time there. With the exception of several conversations, the Swami did no public work in London at this time. On August 16, in response to the many invitations which constantly reached him from America, he left London, accompanied by Swami Turiyananda and his American disciples. Of the voyage across the Atlantic Mrs. Funke writes:

> ". . . These were ten never-to-be-forgotten days spent on the ocean. Reading and exposition of the Gita occupied every morning, also reciting and translating poems and stories from the Sanskrit and chanting old Vedic hymns. The sea was smooth and at night the moonlight was entrancing. Those were wonderful evenings; the Master paced up and down the deck, a majestic figure in the moonlight, stopping now and then to speak to us of the beauties of Nature. 'And if all this Mâyâ is so beautiful, think of the wondrous beauty of the Reality behind it!' he would exclaim.
>
> "One especially fine evening when the moon was at the full and softly mellow and golden, a night of mystery and enchantment, he stood silently for a long time drinking in the beauty of the scene. Suddenly he turned to us and said: 'Why recite poetry when there,' pointing to sea and sky, 'is the very essence of poetry?'
>
> "We reached New York all too soon, feeling that we never could be grateful enough for those blessed, intimate ten days with the Guru. . . ."

The very afternoon of his arrival in New York from Glasgow, after visiting the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami with his Gurubhai accompanied them to their beautiful country-home called Ridgley Manor, on the Hudson, in the Catskill mountains, about one hundred and fifty miles from New York. He waited there "for the leading that he confidently expected, to show him where his next effort was to lie." A month later he was joined there by Sister Nivedita. The hosts with their family were devoted to the Swami, who was much better, and had put himself under the treatment of a famous osteopath. He remained in this country-retreat until November 5; his presence was a constant delight to his hosts, and his mind reverted to many interesting experiences of his former stay in America.

Swami Abhedananda who had been away from New York on a lecturing tour at the time of the Swami's arrival, was soon wired to by him to come and meet him at his retreat, in order to report concerning the New York work. He stayed about ten days, and it was with great satisfaction that the Swami learned that the Vedânta Society was now in permanent quarters. On October 15, the "Vedânta Society Rooms" were formally opened by Swami Abhedananda, who held regular classes there from the twenty-second. An American Brahmachârini writes concerning the Swami at the time:

> "It is already three weeks since Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda reached America from England. Swami Vivekananda is rapidly recovering from all indisposition, and for the gain made in health during the voyage from India to England, is daily adding renewed vigour. The few chosen ones who have heard the Swami in easy home-talks since his arrival, are deeply impressed with the great message of truth he bears,—a larger and fuller prophecy and vision than any he has yet given to the East or West. Swami Turiyananda is beloved by all who meet him and is heartily welcomed as a needed teacher. Happy and blessed are we by their presence. . . . Swami Vivekananda is resting quietly in the home of loving friends, where Swami Turiyananda also is, together with Swami Abhedananda. Swami Turiyananda has endeared himself to all who have met him, and his work is opening out to him in a hearty welcome from students of Vedânta, eager for his teaching. . . ."

And soon work did open out for the newly-arrived Swami Turiyananda. He is seen a few weeks later in Mont Clair, a short distance from New York, teaching the children, by means of stories and with readings from the *Hitopadesa* and other books of Indian wisdom. He also lectured regularly at the Vedânta Society Rooms, co-operating in the work of Swami Abhedananda. Later on, in December, he went to Cambridge, Mass., and did much valuable work there. On December 10, he read a paper on "Sankarâchârya," before the Cambridge Conference. The Professors of the Harvard University and many other learned men spoke in high terms of it.

The first appearance of Swami Vivekananda was at a meeting of the New York Society at which he presided on Tuesday, November 8, to a question-and-answer class. On the tenth he was given a public reception, in the library of the Vedânta Society, to which many of his New York friends of former days came to meet their beloved teacher again. There was also present a large number who had been attracted by his name or his books and wished to meet him personally. An address of welcome was presented to him by some of his old friends, in replying to which the Swami made it plain that his heart was overflowing with love and good-will to them.

Even in the midst of his multifarious activities, the Swami would, now and then, get a glimpse of a strange foreboding regarding his life on this mortal plane. One day he said to Swami Abhedananda, "Well, brother, my days are numbered. I shall live only for three or four years at the most." The Gurubhai replied, "You must not talk like that, Swamiji. You are fast recovering your health. If you stay here for some time, you will be completely restored to your former strength and vigour. Besides, we have got so much work to do. It has only begun." But the Swami replied significantly, "You do not understand me, brother. I feel that I am growing very big. My self is expanding so much that at times I feel as if this body could not contain me any more. I am about to burst. Surely, this cage of flesh and blood cannot hold me for many days more.''

After a fortnight's stay in New York, during which he paid visits to a few neighbouring towns, the Swami left on November 22, for California. At the earnest solicitation of his devoted friends and admirers in Chicago he stopped over there, attending several receptions which were given in his honour. He met again many people who had known him in the days of the Parliament of Religions. It was a great delight to him to find how many, who had not even seen him, had been attracted to his teaching and had not only gained understanding by reading his books, but had also developed a great reverence for India and Indian things. Here, also, he visited several outlying suburbs where he was entertained at dinner or at receptions by various distinguished persons. The Swami reached California in the first days of December and did not return to New York until June 7 of the following year.

The Swami's immediate destination was Los Angeles where he was the guest of Mrs. Blodgett. Miss MacLeod and her brother were also at the time the guests of the same lady, who moved in quiet and distinguished intellectual circles. He remained in Los Angeles till the middle of February. Shortly after his arrival there, he found himself again surrounded by many persons eager to see the Teacher with whose religious writings they were familiar. Invitations pressed in upon him. He was compelled to give a series of lectures, the first of which was delivered on December 8, in Blanchard Hall, the subject being the ''Vedânta Philosophy.'' The next lecture, "The Cosmos," was given at Amity Church under the auspices of the Academy of Sciences of Southern California. Several other lectures were delivered in public halls in Los Angeles, and among them were, "Work and Its Secret" (January 4, 1900), "Powers of the Mind" (January 8), and "The Open Secret." He also spoke in the adjacent town of Pasadena, in the Universalist Church and in the Shakespeare Club. The lectures, "Christ The Messenger" and "The Way to the Realization of a Universal Religion" delivered to huge audiences were the most popular. He gave several noteworthy addresses on "The Epics of Ancient India," before the Shakespeare Club. Among others, the subjects of this series were "The Râmâyana," "The Mâhâbhârata," "The Story of Jada Bharata," and "The Story of Prahlâd." On February 3, he also gave before the same club his lecture on "The Great Teachers of the World." In fact, between Los Angeles and Pasadena, a distance of ten miles, he had to deliver, at the earnest request of the public, one lecture every day during his stay there. It seemed as if much of the old spirit of work had come back to the Swami. The climate, happily, proved to be most salutary for him and he worked at his best.

At the special request of an association known as the "Home of Truth," he spent nearly a month at its headquarters in Los Angeles, and held many classes there, and gave several public lectures at which, every time, more than a thousand people attended. He spoke much, in these days, of "Applied Psychology" and found that Californians were particularly ready for the "Râja Yoga" path of the spiritual life. Many of the members of the Home of Truth became the Swami's ardent followers. His simple manners, his great intellectuality, and above all, his towering spirituality completely won them over. According to a rule of their organisation tobacco was tabooed. In the Swami's case this rule was abrogated, because their love for him was beyond measure. The sect was much akin to Christian Science, and was therefore exceedingly interested in his remarks concerning the overcoming of body-bondage and ailments through mental and spiritual processes.

At Los Angeles he was for a time the guest of Miss Spencer, who became one of his fervent disciples. While there, he was wont to sit on the floor beside her aged mother who was blind and nearing the end. At Miss Spencer's question, why he seemed so interested in her mother, he told her that death like birth was a mystery, and so the mother was an interesting study to him. When the body approaches dissolution, the sense-activities are stilled as the soul gradually passes to the life beyond. This state, so sad and repulsive to a mind limited to external appearances, was to the Swami's spiritual insight, pregnant with interest and significance!

The magazine, *Unity*, describing his work in Los Angeles, speaks as follows:

> ". . . Hindu missionaries are not among us to convert us to a better religion than what Christ gave us, but rather in the name of religion itself, to show us that there is in reality but one Religion, and that we can do no better than to put into practice what we profess to believe. We had eight lectures at the Home by the Swami Vivekananda, and all were intensely interesting. . . . There is combined in the Swami Vivekananda the learning of a university-president, the dignity of an archbishop, with the grace and winsomeness of a free and natural child. Getting upon the platform without a moment's preparation, he would soon be in the midst of his subject, sometimes becoming almost tragic as his mind would wander from deep metaphysics to the prevailing conditions in Christian

countries of today, whose people go and seek to reform the Filipinos with the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other, or in South Africa allow children of the same Father to cut each other to pieces. In contrast to this condition of things, he described what took place during the last great famine in India where men would die of starvation beside their cattle (cows) rather than stretch forth a hand to kill. . . .''

When the Swami left Los Angeles it was to become the guest of the Reverend Dr. Benjamin Fay Mills of Oakland, at whose church, the First Unitarian Church of Oakland, he gave eight lectures to crowded audiences numbering often as many as two thousand persons; and the mornings following, he would find his name blazoned in all the leading newspapers of the State. These lectures were given on the occasion of a local Congress of Religions that was being held at the time in the Rev. B. F. Mills' church, and thus hundreds of prominent Californian clergymen had the opportunity to meet the Swami, to exchange ideas, and in many instances, to be converted to his spiritual outlook. In a lecture before the gathering, the Rev. Dr. Mills speaking on ''The Hindu Way of Salvation,'' introduced the Swami in terms of highest praise, describing him as, ''a man of gigantic intellect, indeed, one to whom our greatest university professors were as mere children.''

The impression which the Swami made was tremendous. A great stir was created in the leading intellectual circles of the State. In the latter part of February, at the request of numerous distinguished residents of the adjoining city of San Francisco, the metropolis of the State of California, the Swami went there and worked strenuously till the month of May. His first lecture was on ''The Ideal of a Universal Religion,'' delivered at the Golden Gate Hall, where he received a tremendous ovation. He was induced to take spacious quarters in Turk Street so that he might open private classes for the benefit of numerous interested persons. Here he commenced regular training classes in Râja Yoga and meditation, and gave also semi-public lectures on the Gita and the Vedânta philosophy in general. He had come to this State, practically unknown except to a considerable number of newspaper readers who recalled the reports of his lectures at the time of the Parliament of Religions. Of course, in ecclesiastical circles all over the United States his name was widely known.

Every Sunday during the months of March and April, the Swami spoke publicly in San Francisco, at Red Men's Hall, Golden Gate Hall, and at Union Square Hall. Three evening lectures a week were also given at Washington Hall, and later at the Social Hall he gave a short series of lectures on Bhakti Yoga. Besides these, on alternate evenings he lectured at Alameda and Oakland. The subjects of some of his Sunday public lectures given in San Francisco were, "Buddha's Message to the World," "The Religion of Arabia and Mahomet the Prophet," "Is the Vedânta Philosophy the Future Religion?" "Christ's Message to the World," "Mahomet's Message to the World," "Krishna's Message to the World," "The Mind and Its Powers and Possibilities," "Mind Culture," "Concentration of the Mind," "Nature and Man," "Soul and God," "The Goal," "Science of Breathing," "Meditation," "The Practice of Religion, Breathing and Meditation," "The Worshipped and Worshipper," and "Formal Worship." "Art and Science in India" was the topic on which he addressed the audience at Wendte Hall, in San Francisco.

At Tucker Hall in Alameda he gave three lectures on the evenings of April 13, 16 and 18, on "Râja Yoga," "Concentration and Breathing," and "The Practice of Religion."

This list, though a partial one, of lectures delivered by the Swami on the Pacific coast of America up to the end of April, shows that most of them touched on Râja Yoga. Unfortunately, with the exception of a few, all are lost, because they were not taken down.

Once, whilst in some town on the banks of a river in America, he chanced to meet with a party of young men who were shooting vainly from a bridge at egg-shells, which were moving with the current of a small stream. These shells were loosely strung together with strings, at one end of which were tied small bits of wood inserted crosswise into the shells, and at the other, a tiny stone, which served as a sort of anchor. The Swami watched them, smiling at their failure, when one of the party noticed this and challenged him to try his hand at the game, assuring him that it was not so easy as it looked. Then the Swami took a gun and successively hit about a dozen shells! They were all astonished and thought that he must evidently be a practised hand. But he assured them to the contrary, saying that he had never handled a gun before, and that the secret of his success lay in the concentration of the mind.

The Swami found his California work prospering beyond measure. In Los Angeles and Pasadena, Vedânta meetings were being held by his students regularly, and the Swami received many letters begging him to return there, but this was at present impossible as his work in the northern part of the State absorbed all his attention. He, however, promised his disciples that he would send some other Sannyâsin teacher to take up his work, when feasible. In the North, several Vedânta centres were formed in San-Francisco, Oakland and Alameda. Among his more intimate disciples in California were Mrs. Hansborough of Los Angeles, and Dr. M. H. Logan, and Messrs. C. F. Patterson and A. S. Wollberg, respectively the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the newly-formed Vedânta Society in San Francisco. The San Francisco Vedânta students were eager to have a Swami and a permanent Vedânta centre. So, like the Los Angeles disciples, they begged the Swami to send them another teacher when he should depart; and this he promised to do. In fact, he wrote to Swami Turiyananda to come at once, but this was not practicable, as he was then conducting the classes in New York in the place of Swami Abhedananda, who was away on a lecture tour. The Swami stayed in San Francisco and its vicinity until the end of May.

Before he left California the Swami received the munificent gift of a large tract of land, 160 acres in extent, as a place of retreat for students of the Vedânta, through the generosity of Miss Minnie C. Boock, one of his devoted students. Though the Swami himself did not visit this place, he was much pleased with the accounts he heard of it. It was very suitably adapted for the purpose, being fifty miles from a railway station and twelve miles from the nearest habitation, except the post-office, three miles distant. It was virgin soil, surrounded by forests and hills, being situated on the uplands in the southern part of the valley of the San Antone on the eastern slope of Mount Hamilton in Santa Clara County of California at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. It was twelve miles from the famous Lick Observatory on Mt. Hamilton. Being thus removed far from the conflicting influences of worldly life, the name *Sânti Asrama* or "Peace Retreat" was appropriately given to it. On August 2, Swami Turiyananda went there for the first time with twelve students whom he trained regularly in meditation, living with them the austere monastic life as in India. These annual retirements of one month in the year have been continued by the Swami in charge of the San Francisco centre.

Late in the spring of 1900, in the company of friends the Swami retired to Camp Taylor, in the country, for a short vacation. The end of the lecture course found him much exhausted. His health necessitated rest and change; and when he returned to San Francisco after three weeks, it was thought advisable that he should stop at the residence of his disciple, Dr. Logan, in Oak Street, there to be under constant medical supervision, if necessary. Dr. William Forster also attended him. He was prevented from public lecturing for the moment, but gave a series of four talks on the Gita in the parlours at 6, Geary Street and at the private hall at 770 Oak Street on May 24, 26, 28 and 29.

There were many occasions, here in California, when the Swami gave himself over to recreation and communion with his disciples. At the retreat at Camp Taylor he took long walks in the open country and felt himself much improved thereby. And he would often join picnic parties arranged by his disciples in the hills that lie between Pasadena and Los Angeles, or even beyond Pasadena, in the forest defiles and mountain valleys. There were three ladies, well-connected in Los Angeles society and sisters of the well-known banker, Mr. Mead, whom the Swami reckoned as his disciples. One of these, Mrs. Hansborough, would go to any length to be of service to the Swami. They it was who attended to his needs while in that city. He frequently told these three sisters stories of his Indian experience and initiated them, in an especial sense, into Indian ideals, and they in their turn helped in propagating the Vedânta teaching.

But though he was generally full of mirth and childlike sweetness and freedom, there was always the undertone of serious states of mind. Throughout his Western experience one notices the longing for the Absolute, in letters, from the platform, or in private conversation. And at Alameda, probably when his work had weighed heaviest on him physically, and his mind was tired from the strain, one finds him writing a letter to Miss MacLeod, in which is a very passion of longing to break all bonds and fly unto the Highest. One finds in this letter the old monastic instinct in him cropping forth; the desire for the Supreme Isolation, the yearning for that ecstasy which he had so often known in Dakshineswar in days long past. This letter, dated April 18, 1900, reads:

". . . Work is always difficult. Pray, for me, that my work stops for ever, and my whole soul be absorbed in Mother. Her work, She knows. . . .

"I am well, very well mentally. I feel the rest of the soul more than that of the body. The battles are lost and won! I have bundled my things and am waiting for the Great Deliverer.

"Siva, O Siva, carry my boat to the other shore!

"After all, I am only the boy who used to listen with rapt wonderment to the wonderful words of Ramakrishna under the Banyan at Dakshineswar. That is my true nature; works and activities, doing good and so forth are all superimpositions.

"Now I again hear his voice, the same old voice thrilling my soul. Bonds are breaking, love dying, work becoming tasteless; the glamour is off life. Now only the voice of the Master calling! 'I come, Lord, I come.' 'Let the dead bury the dead; follow thou Me!' 'I come, my beloved Lord, I come!'

"Yes, I come! Nirvâna is before me! I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath.

"I am glad I was born, glad I suffered so, glad I did make big blunders, glad to enter Peace. I leave none bound; I take no bonds. Whether this body will fall and release me, or I enter into Freedom in the body,—the old man is gone, gone forever, never to come back again!

"The guide, the Guru, the leader, the teacher, has passed away;—the boy, the student, the servant, is left behind.

"You understand why I don't want to meddle with. . . .; who am I to meddle with any one? I have long given up my place as the leader. I have no right to raise my voice. Since the beginning of this year, I have not dictated anything in India. You know that. . . . The sweetest moments of my life have been when I was drifting. I am drifting again,—with the bright, warm sun ahead, and masses of vegetation around,—and in the heat everything is so still, so calm,—and I am drifting, languidly, in the warm heart of the river! I dare not make a splash with my hands or feet, for fear of breaking the wonderful stillness,—stillness that makes you feel sure it is an illusion!

"Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance the thirst for power! Now they are vanishing and I drift. I come, Mother, I come, in Thy warm bosom,—floating wheresoever Thou takest me,—in the voiceless, in the strange, in the wonderland. I come, a spectator, no more an actor!

"Oh, it is so calm! My thoughts seem to come from a great, great distance in the interior of my own heart. They seem like faint, distant whispers, and peace is upon everything—sweet, sweet peace—like that one feels for a few moments just before falling into sleep, when things are seen and felt like shadows,—without fear, without love, without emotion,—peace that one feels alone, surrounded with statues and pictures! I come, Lord, I come.

"The world *is*, but not beautiful nor ugly, but as sensations, without exciting any emotion! Oh, the blessedness of it! Everything is good and beautiful, for things are all losing their relative proportions to me,—my body among the first. Om That Existence!"

The Swami, it may be said, had worked in California to excess. In all, his public lectures both in the north and in the south of the State numbered no less than one hundred. Besides these, he was always busy giving private interviews and intimate teaching to numerous ardent souls. No wonder then that he was exhausted. But in a letter written at the time he said that his mind was never clearer than in these days. The lectures which created the widest attention and which were reported in long hand were, as has been said, first of all, "Christ The Messenger," then "Work and Its Secret," "The Powers of the Mind," "Hints on Practical Spirituality," "The Open Secret," "The Way to the Realisation of a Universal Religion," and "The Great Teachers of the World," —all of which were delivered either at Los Angeles or at Pasadena.

Towards the latter part of his stay in California, the Swami received a pressing invitation from Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, then in London, to join them in Paris in July for the sake of his health. He was also invited by the Foreign Delegates' Committee of the Congress of the History of Religions that was to be held in conjunction with the Paris Exposition of 1900, to lecture before that distinguished assembly. As he thought it best to spend several weeks in New York before sailing, he bade his disciples in San Francisco, Alameda and Oakland farewell, at the end of May, promising them to send in the near future Swami Turiyananda as the head of the Vedânta movement in California.

The journey across the continent proved most fatiguing. He made short stops *en route* at Chicago and Detroit to visit his old friends there. When he arrived in New York, he took up his residence at the Vedânta Society headquarters, and received many of his former disciples and admirers, persons who desired to meet him, after reading his books. He gave only a few public lectures, as his time was chiefly given over to teaching and conversation with his old friends and disciples. He was much pleased at the progress of the Vedânta Society. Because of the pressure of other business, Mr. Leggett had resigned the presidentship in favour of Dr. Herschell C. Parker of Columbia College, who was unanimously elected to replace him. Among the honorary members of the Society at this time were the Rev. Dr. R. Heber Newton and Charles R. Lanman, Professor of Sanskrit at Harvard University. The Swami lectured on four successive Sundays and held Gita classes on four Saturday mornings during his stay in New York. He spoke to Swami Turiyananda, who had been lecturing at the Society rooms since April, and holding Children's Classes in Vedânta, of his intention of sending him to California at once. At first the Swami found it extremely hard to persuade Swami Turiyananda to take charge of the Sânti Asrama. The brother disciple always hesitated to plunge headlong into any work—and tried to avoid all responsibilities. Devoted to meditation and austerity, he was averse to activity. Failing to persuade Swami Turiyananda by arguments to take charge of the Sânti Asrama, the Swami said at last, "It is the will of the Mother that you should take charge of the work there." At this the brother disciple said jocosely, "Rather say, it is your will. Certainly you have not heard the Mother to communicate Her will to you in that way. How can we hear the words of the Mother!" "Yes, brother," said the Swami with great emotion, "yes, the words of the Mother can be heard as clearly as we hear one another. It only requires a fine nerve to hear the words of the Mother." The Swami expressed this with such fervour that Swami Turiyananda could not but accept the Swami's words as expressing the will of the Divine Mother and he cheerfully agreed to take charge of the Sânti Asrama.

In the report of the Assistant Secretary of the Vedânta Society for June, one reads:

SECOND VISIT TO AMERICA

On June 7, Swami Vivekananda came to New York from California and stayed in the Vedânta Society Rooms, 102 E. 58th St., with Swami Turiyananda and Swami Abhedananda. At that time Sister Nivedita was also in the City and she was present at most of the meetings.

"On the following Saturday, June 9, Swami Vivekananda conducted the morning class on the Bhagavad-Gita, relieving Swami Turiyananda, who usually taught the class. On Sunday morning, June 10, Swami Vivekananda lectured in the Vedânta Society Rooms on the subject of 'Vedânta Philosophy.' The rooms were filled to their utmost capacity with students and old friends of the Swami. A reception was given to him on the following Friday evening, thus giving an opportunity to old friends to meet him once more, and many students who had long wished to meet the renowned author of Râja Yoga, were made happy by a few kind words and a grasp of the Master's hand. He spoke on the object of the Vedânta Society, and of the work in America.

"The next morning, Saturday, June 17, he also took charge of the class and lectured on 'What is Religion?' Sister Nivedita spoke in the evening on 'The Ideals of Hindu Women,' giving a most beautiful and sympathetic account of their simple life and purity of thought. The women students, who were always eager to hear of the every-day life and thought of their Hindu sisters, especially enjoyed this talk. The Sister Nivedita was pleased at this interest and answered many questions giving a clearer idea of life in India to most than they had ever known.

"On June 23, Swami Vivekananda conducted the Gita class, and on Sunday, June 24, he lectured on 'The Mother-worship.' In the evening Sister Nivedita spoke again on 'The Ancient Arts of India.' Her talk was most entertaining because of her familiarity with the subject. Her visit and conversation were very instructive. . . .

"Swami Vivekananda conducted the class on the morning of June 30, and the next morning, Sunday, July 1, lectured on the 'Source of Religion.' As on all previous occasions, the rooms were crowded, and all felt it a privilege to listen to him. On July 3, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Turiyananda left New York, the former going to Detroit to visit old friends, and the latter to California, to establish a *Sânti Asrama* and to take charge of the Vedânta Society work at San Francisco. . . .

"On July 10, Swami Vivekananda returned from Detroit and stayed at the Society rooms here until the latter part of July. On the 20th he sailed for Paris. . . .''

Memorable were the parting words of the Swami to Swami Turiyananda when the latter asked for some advice as how to conduct the work which he was being sent to take up. ''Go and establish the Asrama in California,'' exclaimed the Swami in reply. ''Hoist the flag of Vedânta there. From this moment destroy even the very memory of India! Above all, live the *life* and Mother will see to the rest!''

Among the celebrities who were in sympathy with the Swami's work and with the Vedânta philosophy and Indian culture at large, were Professor Seth Low, the President of the Columbia University, Prof. A. V. W. Jackson of Columbia College, Professor Thomas R. Price and E. Engalsmann of the College of the City of New York, and Professors Richard Botthiel, N. M. Butler, N. A. McLouth, E. G. Sihler, Calvin Thomas and A. Cohn of the New York University.

Among the disciples whom the Swami frequently visited in New York and with whom he spent many hours in discussing philosophy and plans of work was Miss Waldo. Another intimate friend of the Swami, and one who had introduced him into very distinguished circles, both in Chicago in the days of the Parliament of Religions, and in New York, was Mrs. Annie Smith, whom he was wont to call ''Mother Smith.'' She was born in India, and from early womanhood had interested herself in Indian philosophy. She was well known in America as a lecturer on Oriental subjects. Mrs. Smith, some time after the Swami's passing away, spent four years in Los Angeles and in Pasadena, and wrote that she ''found the spiritual seed of the Swami's planting springing up all over the Pacific coast, for he vitalised American religions and sects, as well as Hinduism."

His stay of seven days in Detroit at the house of Mrs. Greenstidel was devoted to resting; only once or twice did he hold conversaziones for the benefit of his immediate disciples and intimate friends. The last ten days that the Swami spent in rest and retirement in New York in the circle of his followers, were enjoyed not only by the latter but also by himself, though the stay was all too short. One of them writing of the Swami at this time, says:

> "He has broadened in his sympathies and expanded in his knowledge during the four years of his absence from America. While the season is now over for lectures and classes, Swamiji's old friends are basking in the sunshine of his presence. His health is now excellent and he is his dear old self once more, with yet a mingling of a newer, nobler self that makes us adore him more than ever. . . . He has to be a world-worker, and so no rest can be for him until that work is done."

Before taking final leave of Swami Vivekananda from the American work it would be interesting to go through the following reminiscences recorded by an intimate disciple of the Swami, which give an impression of his influence in California through lectures and classes:

> "It is now more than ten years since the Swami Vivekananda lectured to California audience; it seems but yesterday. It was here as elsewhere; the audiences were his from the outset and remained his to the end. They were swept along on the current of his thought without resistance. Many there were who did not want to resist: whose pleasure and novelty it was to have light thrown into the hidden recesses of their minds by the proximity of a luminous personality. There were a few who would have resisted if they could but whose powers of resistance were neutralised by the irresistible logic, acumen and childlike simplicity of the Great Teacher. Indeed, there were a few who arose to demur but who resumed their seats either in smiling acquiescence or in bewildered impotency.
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> "The Swami's personality impressed itself on the mind

with visual intensity. The speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expression and gesticulation; the wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency; the translations following in smiling confidence,—all these set off by the spectacular apparel of the Hindu Sannyâsin,—who can forget them?

"As a lecturer he was unique: never referring to notes, as most lecturers do; and though he repeated many discourses on request they were never mere repititions. He seemed to be giving something of himself, to be speaking from a super-experience. The most abstruse points of the Vedânta were retrieved from the domain of mere speculation by a vital something which seemed to emanate from him. His utterances were dynamic and constructive: arousing thought and directing it into synthetic process. Thus he was not only a lecturer but a Teacher of the highest order as well.

"He encouraged the asking of questions at the conclusion of every lecture and would go to any length to make his questioners understand. On one occasion after persistent queries by a number of persons, it occurred to some one that they were plying the Swami too insistently with questions, and he remarked to that effect. 'Ask all the questions you like—the more the better,' was the Swami's good-natured reply. 'That is what I am here for, and I won't leave you till you understand.' The applause was so prolonged that he was obliged to wait till it subsided before he could continue. At times he literally startled people into belief by his answers. To the question, after a lecture on Reincarnation, 'Swami, do you remember your past life?' he answered quickly and seriously, 'Yes, clearly, even when I was a little boy.'

"Quick and, when necessary, sharp at repartee, he met all opposition with the utmost good nature and even enjoyment. His business was to make his hearers understand and he succeeded as, perhaps, no other lecturer on abstruse subjects ever did. To popularise abstractions, to place them within the mental grasp of even very ordinary intellects was his achievement. He reached them all. 'In India,' he said, 'they tell me that I ought not to teach Advaita Vedânta to the people at large. But I say that I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths.'

"Once at the conclusion of a lecture he thus announced his next lecture: 'Tomorrow night I shall lecture on *The Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities.* Come to hear me. I have something to say to you. I shall do a little bomb-throwing.' Here he glanced smilingly over the audience, and then with a wave of his hand added, 'Come on! It will do you good.' The next night there was barely standing-room. He kept his word. Bombs were thrown, and he, of all people, knew how to throw them with telling effect. In this lecture he devoted considerable time to the subject of chastity as a means of strengthening the mind. As a practice to develop purity, he expounded the theory of looking upon every woman as one's mother. When he had presented the idea, he paused and, as though in response to inarticulate questionings from the audience, said, 'O yes, this is a theory. I stand up here to tell you about this beautiful theory; but when I think of my own mother I know that to me she is different to any other woman. There *is* a difference. We cannot deny it. But we see this difference because we think of ourselves as bodies. This theory is to be fully realised in meditation. These truths are first to be heard, then to be meditated upon.'

"He held purity to be for the householder as well as for the monk, and laid great stress on that point. 'The other day a young Hindu came to see me,' he said. 'He has been living in this country for about two years, and suffering from ill-health for some time. In the course of our talk, he said that the theory of chastity must be all wrong, because the doctors in this country had advised him against it. They told him that it was against the law of nature. I told him to go back to India, where he belonged, and to listen to the teachings of his ancestors, who had practised chastity for thousands of years.' Then turning a face puckered into an expression of unutterable disgust, he thundered, 'You doctors in this country who hold that chastity is against the law of nature, don't know what you are talking about. You don't know the meaning of the word purity. You are beasts! beasts! I say, with the morals of a tomcat, if that is the best you have to say on that subject!' Here he glanced defiantly over the audience, challenging opposition by his very glance. No voice was raised, though there were several physicians present.

"Bombs were thrown in all of his lectures. Audiences were jolted out of hereditary ruts, and New Thought students, so-called, were subjected to scathing though constructive criticisms without mercy. Smilingly, he would announce the most stupendous Vedântic conceptions so opposed to Christian theologic dogma; then pause an instant,—how many, many times, and with such winsome effect!—with his teeth pressed over his lower lip, as though with bated breath, observing the result. Imagine, if you can, greater violence done to the traditional teachings of Christendom than by his fiery injunction, 'Don't repent! Don't repent!—Spit, if you must, but go on! Don't hold yourselves down by repenting! Throw off the load of sin, if there is such a thing, by knowing your true selves,—The Pure! The Ever Free!. . . That man alone is blasphemous who tells you that you are sinners. . . .' And again, 'This world is a superstition. We are hypnotised into believing it real. The process of salvation is the process of de-hypnotisation. . . . This universe is just the play of the Lord—that is all. It is all just for fun. There can be no reason for His doing anything. Know the Lord if you would understand His play. Be His playfellow and He will tell you all. . . . And to you, who are philosophers, I say that to ask for a reason for the existence of the universe is illogical because it implies limitation in God, which you do not admit.' Then he entered into one of his wonderful expositions of the salient features of the Advaita Vedânta.

"In the questions which usually followed a talk on this subject, there was almost sure to be the question, 'But, Swami, what will become of one's individuality when he realises his oneness with God?' He would laugh at this question, and playfully ridicule it. He would say: 'You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid-u-al-i-ties,' drawling out the word in laughing mockery. 'Why, you are not individuals yet. When you know God you will be. When you realise your whole nature, you will attain your true individualities, not before. In knowing God you cannot lose anything worth having. . . . There is another thing I am constantly hearing in this country, and that is that we should 'live in harmony with nature!' 'Har-mo-ny with nature,' he ridiculed. 'Why, don't you know that all the progress ever made in the world was made by fighting nature, by conquering nature? There never has been an exception. Trees live in harmony with nature. Perfect harmony there; no opposition there,—and no progress. We are to resist nature at every point if we are to make any progress. Something funny happens and nature says, ' cry,' and we cry—'

" 'But,' interposed an old lady in the audience, ' it would be very hard not to mourn for those we love, and I think we would be very hard-hearted if we did not mourn.' 'O yes, Madam,' he replied, 'it is hard, no doubt. But what of that? All great accomplishments are hard. Nothing worth while comes easy. But don't lower the ideal because it is difficult to attain. Hold the banner of freedom aloft! You do not weep, Madam, because you want to, but because nature forces you. When nature says—'Weep!' say 'No! I shall not weep!' Strength! Strength! Strength!—say that to yourself day and night. You are the Strong! The Pure! The Free! No weakness in you; no sin; no misery!'

"Such statements, vitalised by his tremendous personality, placed him in the same class with the world's greatest spiritual teachers. During these lectures, one was suspended in a spiritual firmament by the proximity of a Soul to whom the world was really a joke, and to whom Consciousness, super-cosmic, was the One and only Reality.

"The Swami was blessed with an irrepressible sense of humour, which enlivened his lectures and classes, and at times relieved the tenseness of embarrassing situations. Observe his parry to the question incredulously hurled at him at the close of a lecture which culminated in an impassioned outburst on the glory of God-Consciousness: 'Swami, have you seen God!' 'What!' he returned, his face lighting up with a happy smile, 'Do I look like it,—a big fat man like me?'

"On another occasion while he was expounding Advaita, an old man, sitting in the front row, arose deliberately, and with a look which said as plainly as words, 'Let me get out of this place in a hurry,' hobbled down the aisle and out of the hall, pounding the floor with his cane at every step. The Swami apparently enjoyed the situation, for amusement overspread his features as he paused to watch him. The attention of the audience was divided between the Swami, smiling, fun-loving, and the disgusted old man who had had enough of him.

"The whimsical, playful side of the Swami's character would break out at any moment. Certain Theosophic and New Thought students were interested primarily in occult phenomena. One such asked, 'Swami, have you ever seen an elemental?' 'O yes. We have them in India for breakfast,' was the quick reply. Nor did he hesitate to joke about his own personality. At one time when looking at some works of art the Swami, surveying a painting of some corpulent monks, remarked, 'Spiritual men are fat. See, how fat I am!' Again, speaking about the power of prophecy in the saints he said, 'Once when I was a little boy playing in the streets, a sage, passing by, put his hand on my head and said, 'My boy, you will be a great man some day.' And now see where I am!' At this little conceit his face fairly beamed with fun. There was nothing egotistical in such statements. His simple fun-loving nature carried his hearers along with him in the spirit of his joke. At another time: 'The Christian idea of hell is not at all terrifying to me. I have read Dante's Inferno three times, but I must say that I find nothing terrible in it. There are many kinds of Hindu hells. When a glutton dies, for instance, he is surrounded by great quantities of the very best kinds of food. He has a stomach a thousand miles long, and a mouth as small as a pinhead! Think of that!' During this lecture he got very warm owing to the poor ventilation. On leaving the hall after the lecture, he was met by a chill blast of north wind. Gathering his coat tightly about him he said vehemently, 'Well, if *this* isn't hell, I don't know what is.'

"Dilating on the life of the Sannyâsin as compared to that of the householder he said, 'Someone asked me if I was ever married.' Here he paused to glance smilingly over the audience. A multitudinous titter was the response. Then the smile giving place to a look of horror, he continued. 'Why, I wouldn't be married for anything. It is the devil's own game.' Here he paused as though to give his words effect. Then raising his hand to check the audible appreciation that had begun, he went on with a quite serious expression overspreading his features, 'There is one thing, however, that I have against the monastic system, and that is,'—(another pause) '—that it takes the best men away from the community.' He did not attempt to stem the outburst that followed. He had his little joke and enjoyed it. On another occasion while speaking seriously he suddenly broke out in merriment, 'As soon as a man gets a little sense he dies. He begins by having a big stomach which sticks out farther than his head. When he gains wisdom his stomach disappears and his head becomes prominent. Then he dies.'

"The Swami's assimilation of the world's maturest religious thought and his consummate power in expounding it, contrasted curiously with his youthful appearance, and much conjecture was rife as to his age. He must have known this, for he availed himself of an opportunity to have a little fun on this point at the expense of the audience. Alluding to his own age, which was *apropos* of the subject, he said, ' I am only—' (breathless pause, anticipation)—' of a few years,' he added mischievously. A sigh of disappointment ran over the audience. The Swami looked on waiting for the applause, which he knew was ready to break out. He enjoyed his own jokes as much as did the audience. Once he laughed outright at some particularly pointed joke which he had just told. The house was in an uproar at once. The joke is irretrievably lost. What a pity! During his series of lectures on *The Ideals of India,* the fact was disclosed that he was a wonderful story-teller. Here, perhaps, he was at his best. He gave life to the ancient tales by telling them in his inimitable fashion, the subject giving full play to his unsurpassed power of interpretation, and to that wealth of facial expression which was his greatest personal charm. ' I love to tell these stories,' he said. ' They are the life of India. I have heard them since babyhood. I never get tired of telling them.'

"The Swami commanded reverence when he revealed himself at times to his audience in one of those wonderful waves of transcendental feeling which he did not try to check. As when he said, 'All faces are dear to me. . . . As it is possible to ' see Helen in an Ethiop's face,' so we must learn to see the Lord in all. All, even the very worst, are Mother's children. The universe, good and bad, is but the play of the Lord.'

"In private interviews he was the ideal host, entering into conversation, argument or story-telling, not only without restraint, but with apparent enjoyment. His personal appearance on my first interview was a pleasurable shock from which I have never fully recovered. He had on a long grey dressing gown, and was sitting cross-legged on a chair, smoking a pipe, his long hair falling in wild disarray over his features. As I advanced he extended a cordial hand and bade me be seated. Memory delivers but fragments of those interviews. What remains vivid is the contact with the great Sannyâsin—the impressions and impetus received—which refuses to be less than the greatest experience in life.

"Speaking of spiritual training for the mind he said, 'The less you read the better. What are books but the vomitings of other men's minds? Why fill your mind with a load of stuff you will have to get rid of? Read the Gita and other good works on Vedânta. That is all you need.' Then again 'The present system of education is all wrong. The mind i crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts, if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will. . . . It took three readings for me to memorise Macaulay's History of England, while my mother memorised any sacred book in only one reading. . . . People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though a rather crude one: A man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes with other men. She's a terror! But, poor fellow, he can't take his mind away from her, and so he suffers.'

"I asked him to explain why the practice of begging, common among religious mendicants, was not opposed to renunciation. He replied, 'It is a question of the mind. If the mind anticipates, and is affected by the results—that is bad, no doubt. The giving and receiving of alms should be free; otherwise it is not renunciation. If you should put a hundred dollars on that table for me, and should expect me to thank you for it you could take it away again. I would not touch it. My living was provided for before I came here, before I was born. I have no concern about it. Whatever belong to a man he will get. It was ready for him before he was born.'

"To the question, 'What do you think about the Immaculate Conception of Jesus?' he replied: 'That is an old claim. There have been many in India who have claimed that. I don't know anything about it. But for my part, I am glad that I had a natural father and mother.' 'But isn't such a theory opposed to the law of nature?' I ventured. 'What is nature to the Lord? It is all His play,' he replied as he knocked the ash from his pipe against the heel of his slipper, regardless of the carpeted floor. Then blowing through the stem to clear it, he continued, 'We are slaves of nature. The Lord is the Master of nature. He can do as He pleases. He can take one or a dozen bodies at a time, if He chooses, and in any way He chooses. How can we limit Him?'

"After answering at length various questions about Râja Yoga, he concluded with a friendly smile, 'But why bother about Râja Yoga? There are other ways.'

"This interview was continued fifteen minutes beyond the time set for a class on Râja Yoga to be held in the front room of the house. We were interrupted by the lady in charge of affairs, rushing into the room and exclaiming, 'Why, Swami! You have forgotten all about the Yoga class. It is fifteen minutes past time now, and the room is full of people.' The Swami arose hastily to his feet, exclaiming to me, 'O, excuse me! We will now go to the front room.' I walked through the hall to the front room. He went through his bedroom, which was between the room we had been sitting in and the front room. Before I was seated he emerged from his room with his hair, (which I have said was in a state of wild disorder) neatly combed, and attired in his Sannyâsin robe! Not more than one minute had elapsed from the time he started from his room with dishevelled hair and in lounging attire, till he came leisurely out into the front room ready to lecture. Speed and precision of action were evidently at his command. It was difficult at times, however, to persuade him to stir beyond the pace he had set for himself. When late for a lecture, for instance, it was sometimes impossible to induce him to hurry for the street car. In response to entreaties to hurry, he would drawl, 'Why do you hurry me? If we don't catch that car, we will catch the next.'

"At these Yoga classes one came closer to the man and teacher than was possible in the lecture hall. The contact was more personal and the influence more direct. The embodiment of holiness, simplicity and wisdom, he seemed speaking with incisive power, and drawing one's mind more to God and renunciation than to proficiency in Râja Yoga practices.

"After delivering a short lecture, he would seat himself cross-legged on the divan and direct in meditation such of the audience as remained for that purpose. His talk was on Râja Yoga, and the practical instruction on simple breathing exercises. He said in part: 'You must learn to sit correctly; then to breathe correctly. This develops concentration; then comes meditation. . . . When practising breathing, think of your body as luminous. . . . Try to look down the spinal cord from the base of the brain to the base of the spine. Imagine that you are looking through the hollow Sushumnâ to the Kundalini rising upward to the brain. . . . Have patience. Great patience is necessary.'

"Such as voiced doubts and fears, he reassured by his, 'I am with you now. Try to have a little faith in me.' One was moved by his persuasive power when he said, 'We learn to meditate that we may be able to think of the Lord. Râja Yoga is only the means to that end. The great Patanjali, author of the Râja Yoga, never missed an opportunity to impress that idea upon his students. Now is the time for you who are young. Don't wait till you are old before you think of the Lord, for then you will not be able to think of Him. The power to think of the Lord is developed when you are young.'

"Seated cross-legged on the divan, clothed in his Sannyâsin garb, with hands held one within the other on his lap, and with his eyes apparently closed, he might have been a statue in bronze, so immovable was he. A Yogi, indeed! Awake only to transcendental thought, he was the ideal, compelling veneration, love and devotion."

It is with these thoughts that one closes this record of the last visit of the Swami to America, and travels on with him to other scenes in other lands. On July 20, the Swami sailed for Paris where further fame and honour awaited him.

XXXVI

THE PARIS CONGRESS AND A TOUR IN EUROPE

From August 1, 1900, when he is seen in Paris, until the middle of the following December when he returned unexpectedly to India, the Swami stayed mostly in Paris with short visits to Lannion in the province of Brittany, Vienna, Constantinople, Athens and Egypt.

In Paris he was at first the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett at their handsome residence in the Place des Etats Unis. Later, on his return from Brittany, where he was the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull, he lived with Monsieur Jules Bois, a famous philosopher, journalist, writer, and student of comparative religion, in order that thereby he might become more proficient in the French language, as his host and his household spoke nothing but French.

While the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett, the Swami met numerous distinguished people at their large and lavish entertainments and numerous *salons,* where celebrated men of all departments of knowledge and culture gathered—poets, philosophers, professors, sculptors, painters, scientists, singers, actors and actresses and moralists. The conversaziones proved splendid opportunities for him to spread his message and exchange ideas with many leading thinkers of the West.

The main event of his stay in Paris was his appearance at the Congress of the History of Religions then in session at Paris in connection with the Paris Exposition Universelle. For this occasion the Swami had prepared himself for two months, endeavouring to master the French language so that he could deliver his lectures in that tongue. Within that time he found that he could speak French with sufficient ease to make the intricate terms of Sanskrit philosophy readily intelligible to his hearers.

The Congress of the History of Religions had been substituted for a real Parliament of Religions which had been the primary idea of the organisers of the Congress. Rumour had it that, owing to the vehement opposition of the Roman Catholic world, the idea of holding another Parliament of Religions had been defeated because of the fear that Oriental ideas might jeopardize the safety of orthodox Christianity. Therefore, at the Paris Congress no discussion on the views and doctrines of any religion was allowed. Its purpose was only to enquire into the historic evolution of the different forms of established faiths and other facts incidental to it. Accordingly, missionary sects of different religions and their beliefs were not represented in the Congress; it was attended only by such scholars as devoted themselves to the study of the origin and history of different religions. Though he was present at several sittings of the Congress, the Swami's ill-health prevented him from lecturing before that assembly more than twice. He had been appointed by the committee to debate with the Western Orientalists as to whether the Vedic religion was the outcome of nature-worship or not. The prominent position he had attained as the spokesman of the Vedânta philosophy and Indian culture in the West, and his numerous lectures and writings, which the Westerners either read or heard, made it evident that he, above all others, was best fitted to interpret the Indian position.

His first words at the Congress were in connection with the paper read by Mr. Gustav Oppert, a German Orientalist, who endeavoured to trace the origin of the Sâlagrâma-Silâ and the Siva-Lingam to mere phallicism. To this the Swami objected, adducing proofs from the Vedas, and particularly the Atharva Veda Samhitâ, to the effect that the Siva-Lingam had its origin in the idea of the Yupa-Stambha or Skambha, the sacrificial post, idealised in Vedic ritual as the symbol of the Eternal Brahman. "As, afterwards," said the Swami, "the Yajna (sacrificial) fire, its smoke, ashes and flames, the Soma plant, and the bull that used to carry on its back the wood for the Vedic sacrifice,—gave place to the conceptions of the brightness of Siva's body, his tawny matted-hair, his blue throat and the riding on the bull of Siva, and so on;—just so, the Yupa-Skambha gave place in time to the Siva-Lingam, and was deified to the high Devahood of Sri Sankara." Then, also, the Siva-Lingam might have been more definitely developed through the influence of Buddhism, with its Bauddha Stupa, or memorial Topes, in which the relics, either of the Buddha himself, or of some great Buddhist Bhikshus, used to be deposited. It was quite probable that during the Buddhistic ascendency the Hindus adopted this custom and used to erect memorials resembling their Skambha. The Sâlagrâma-Silâs were natural stones, resembling the artificially-cut stones of the Dhâtu Garbha, or "metal-wombed" stone-relic-cases of the Bauddha Stupas, and thus being first worshipped by the Bauddhas gradually were adopted into Vaishnavism. The explanation of the Sâlagrâma-Silâ as a phallic emblem was an imaginary invention. It had been a degenerate period in India following the downfall of Buddhism, which had brought on the association of sex with the Siva-Lingam. In reality, the Siva-Lingam and the Sâlagrâma-Silâ had no more to do with Sex-worship than the Holy Communion in Christianity had in common with cannibalism."

In his second lecture the Swami dilated on the Vedas as the common basis of Hinduism as also of Buddhism and every other religious belief in India, the priority of Sri Krishna to Buddha and the alleged influence of Greek thought and art on Indian culture. The Gita, the Swami held, was prior to, if not contemporaneous with, the Mahabharata. Both the thought and the language of the Gita were the same as those of the Mahabharata; therefore, how could the Gita have been later than the Mahabharata? And if it had been compiled much later, in the Buddhist period, why, when it attempted the reconciliation of all the religious creeds prevalent in India at that period, should the Gita not have mentioned Buddha and Buddhism, if Buddhism were then in existence? He said that Krishna was several centuries prior to Buddha, and that the worship of Krishna was much older than that of Buddha.

And as for Greek influence on Indian culture he denied the contention that it was on everything Indian,—Indian literature, Indian art, Indian astrology, Indian arithmetic, and so on. There might be, it was true, some similarity between the Greek and Indian terms in astronomy and so forth, but the Westerners had ignored the direct Sanskrit etymology and sought for some far-fetched etymology from the Greek. That such shallow and biased learning had been manifested by many Orientalists in the West was most deplorable. From a single Sanskrit Sloka, that reads, "The Yavanas are Mlechchhas, in them this science is established, therefore, even they deserve worship like Rishis, . . .", in the West they have gone so far as to declare that all Indian sciences are but echoes of the Greek! Whereas a true reading of the Sloka might show that the Mlechchha disciples of the Aryans are herein praised, in order to encourage them to a further study of the Aryan sciences. The effort to trace the Indian drama to Greek sources was also preposterous, for nothing in the Sanskrit dramas bore any similarity, either to Greek literary methods or to Greek histrionic forms. Lastly, turning Professor Max Müller's own premises against him, the Swami argued that unless one Hindu who had known Greek could be brought forward, one ought not to talk even of Greek influence on Indian science or culture. The Swami closed his arguments with the sound counsel that Western Orientalists, who spent so much time on a single Greek work should do likewise with Sanskrit works; then only some true account of the exchange of ideas between East and West, in various historic periods, could be gathered. Like Pythogoras, the celebrated Greek, whom Clement of Alexandria had no hesitation in calling a pupil of the Brâhmanas, they might even come to India to learn.

After the lecture, many present expressed their opinion that the views of the modern school of Sanskrit scholars in the West were largely the same as those of the Swami. They agreed also with his statement that there was much that was historically true in the Purânas and Hindu traditions. But the learned President of the Congress, however, differed from the Swami with reference to the contemporaneousness of the Gita and the Mahabharata, his reason being that the majority of Western Orientalists thought that the former was not a part of the latter.

While in Paris, both before and after the Congress, the Swami busied himself with observations on French culture. Many of these he embodied in his article *The East and the West.* In this connection, the Paris Exposition afforded him unique opportunities for study. He visited the Exhibition on numerous occasions, always bringing therefrom some new revelation, new contrast, or intellectual discovery. The varied and artistic exhibits pleased the fastidious eye of the Swami, and nothing of interest escaped his keen glance. The authorities of the Exposition received him with honour and he was accorded every opportunity for original observation.

Among the distinguished persons with whom he came into intimate contact during his stay in Paris, were Professor Patrick Geddes of Edinburgh University, Monsieur Jules Bois, Pére Hyacinthe, Mr. Hiram Maxim, Madame Calvé, Madame Sarah Bernhardt, Princess Demidoff, and his own countryman, Dr. J. C. Bose, who had also been invited to attend the Exposition in connection with the Congress of Scientists, and who by his remarkable discoveries had thrilled the whole scientific world. He met Dr. Bose frequently, and he would point out to his numerous acquaintances the greatness of this Indian scientist, "the pride and glory of Bengal." Once at a distinguished gathering, when a disciple of a certain celebrated English scientist laid claim to the fact that her master was experimenting on the growth of a stunted lily, the Swami replied humorously, "O, that's nothing! Bose will make the very pot in which the lily grows respond!"

It was after the Congress of the History of Religions that the Swami accepted the invitation of Mrs. Ole Bull, to become her guest in a cottage she had taken at Lannion in Brittany. Here he gave himself up to leisure and retreat, though his conversations with those who surrounded him, including Sister

Nivedita, now returned from America and likewise the guest of Mrs. Bull, were unusually luminous. The story of Lord Buddha was much in his mind in these days and one finds him reciting passages from the *Jâtakas,* or the *Lalita Vistâra,* or the *Vinaya Pitaka* and other great Buddhist works. He would tell how after the Nirvâna of Buddha, he became the very embodiment of the highest spiritual poetry, and he would illustrate his thoughts with beautiful passages from the Buddhist scriptures relating to the famous *Upâli Prichcha,* or the "Questions of Upâli, the Barber," or to the "Dhaniya Sutta" from the famous *Sutta Nipata.* Drawing philosophical contrasts, he would show the points of difference between the Buddhist and the Advaita positions, and then point out the unity of ideas between the Sublime Negation of the Buddhist and the Supreme Negation of Advaita, saying, "Buddhism must be right! Reincarnation is only a mirage! But this vision is to be reached by the path of Advaita alone!" In his final summing up of statement in this connection he said, "The great point of contrast between Buddhism and Hinduism lies in the fact that Buddhism said, 'Realise all this as illusion,' while Hinduism said, 'Realise that within the illusion is the Real.' Of *how* this was to be done, Hinduism never presumed to enunciate any rigid law. The Buddhist command could only be carried out through monasticism; the Hindu might be fulfilled through any state of life. All alike were roads to the One Real. One of the highest and greatest expressions of the Faith is put into the mouth of a butcher, preaching, by the orders of a married woman, to a Sannyâsin. Thus Buddhism became the religion of a monastic order, but Hinduism, in spite of its exaltation of monasticism remains ever the religion of faithfulness to daily duty, whatever it be, as the path by which man may attain to God." Hinduism, he held, included not only all the faiths within her own fold but the message of Buddhism and Buddha himself as well. She as the mother of religions had learned to regard Buddha as the most lion-hearted of all her Avatârs.

One of the most powerful factors which contributed to the Swami's supreme veneration for Buddha was, to quote Sister Nivedita's words:

> "The spectacle of the constant tallying of his own Master's life, lived before his eyes, with this world-attested story of twenty-five centuries before. In Buddha, he saw Ramakrishna Paramahamsa: in Ramakrishna he saw Buddha. In a flash this train of thought was revealed, one day when he was describing the scene of the death of Buddha. He told how the blanket had been spread for him beneath the tree, and how the Blessed One had lain down, 'resting on his right side, like a lion,' to die, when suddenly there came to him one who ran, for instruction. The disciples would have treated the man as an intruder, maintaining peace at any cost about their Master's death-bed, but the Blessed One overheard, and saying, 'No, no! He who was sent (Lit. the Tathâgata, 'A word,' the Swami explained, 'which is very like your Messiah') is ever ready,' he raised himself on his elbow and taught. This happened four times, and then, and then only, Buddha held himself free to die. . . .
>
> "The immortal story went on to its end. But to one who listened, the most significant moment had been that in which the teller paused at his own words,—'raised himself on his elbow and taught'—and said in brief parenthesis, '*I* saw this, you know, in the case of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa!' And there arose before the mind the story of one, destined to learn from that Teacher, who had travelled a hundred miles, and arrived at Cossipore only when he lay dying. Here also the disciples would have refused admission, but Sri Ramakrishna intervened, insisting on receiving the new-comer, and teaching him."

Sometimes it would give the Swami pleasure to play off Sankaracharya against Buddha, as it were, by calling in Advaita to the aid of Buddhism. The combination of the heart of Buddha and the intellect of Sankaracharya, he considered the highest possibility of humanity, and this he saw only in his own Master amongst the muster-roll of the world's Teachers and Saviours.

The Swami was always the religious observer. In some small chapel in Brittany, or in the great cathedrals of Paris, he saw the points of similarity between the ritual of Hinduism and Roman Catholicism; and in this sense he once proclaimed, "Christianity is not foreign to the Hindu mind." It was in Brittany, when he paid a visit on Michaelmas Day with his hostess and fellow-guests to Mont Saint Michael, that, looking at the dungeon-cages where prisoners were isolated in mediæval times, he was heard to remark under his breath: "What a wonderful place for meditation!" At another time, filled with a consciousness of the Power that worked through him, he exclaimed: "All that is against me must be with me in the end. Am I not HER soldier?"

Some days before he left Brittany his disciple, Sister Nivedita, left for England, there to try to raise interest in her work on behalf of Indian women. Before she went he gave her his blessing and said, "There is a peculiar sect of Mohammedans who are reported to be so fanatical that they take each new-born babe and expose it, saying, 'If God made thee, perish! If Ali made thee, live!" Now this which they say to the child, I say, but in the opposite sense, to you, tonight—'Go forth into the world, and there, if I made you, be destroyed! If Mother made you, live!' " On this occasion, now that she was about to enter, for an indefinite period, on new paths of endeavour without his immediate guidance, the thought must have crossed his mind that old ties were perilous to a foreign allegiance. He had seen so many betrayals of honour that he seemed always to be ready for a new desertion. In any case, the moment was critical to the fate of the disciple, and this he did not fail to realise. Before she had left India, in his company, he had told her that she must resume, as if she had never broken them off, all her old habits and social customs of the West.

When he returned from Brittany to Paris the Swami again moved in the most distinguished circles. In all his talks he missed no opportunity of showing, in ways distinctly his own, the influence of India over the entire thought of mankind. He would refer to the unmistakable evidences of Hindu religious ideas having travelled in ancient times from India, on the one side to Sumatra, Java, Borneo, Celebes, Australia, and even as far as the shores of America, and on the other side, to Tibet, China, Japan, and as far up as Siberia. He would dilate on the extension of the Buddhist missionary work in Syria, Egypt, Macedonia and Epirus in the reigns, respectively, of Antiochus Theos, Ptolemy Philadelphus, Antigonos Gonates and Alexander. Then, perhaps, he would tell his interested visitors, of the influence of the Tartars in the making of universal history, and of their later conquest in Central and Western Asia, and finally in India itself. And oftentimes he would say, "The Tartar is the wine of the race! He gives energy and power to every blood!" He saw Europe as the admixture of numbers of Asiatic and Semi-Asiatic races, intermingled with the barbarians of the forests of Germany and the wildernesses of ancient Gaul and Spain. He saw European culture as formed, to a large extent, by Moorish influence in Spain and the learning and science of the mediæval Arabs. The monumental learning and patriotism which the Swami evinced, captured all minds and hearts. He was scathing in his denunciation of the claim that European dominated Asiatic culture; and history and archæology and philosophy were always at his service to prove his contentions to the contrary.

One of the greatest intimates at this time was Père Hyacinthe, the whilom Carmelite monk. As a monk he exerted a great influence in France and in the whole Catholic world by his learning, oratory and austerities. He was excommunicated in 1869 for persisting in denouncing the abuses of the Church. He obtained a dispensation from his monastic vows and became the Abbé Loyson; but he protested against the declaration of papal infallibility and sided with the Old Catholics. In 1872 he married an American lady and became known as Monsieur Charles Loyson. These episodes in his life created a stir in Europe at the time. The Roman Catholics hated him, the Protestants welcomed him with open arms. The aged Loyson was devoting his time to a reconciliation of the many conflicting views prevalent in Christianity, and to the study of comparative religion. In the Swami's own words, "He was possessed of a very sweet nature, modest and of the temperament of a Bhakta." Many were the times when the Swami who always called him by his old monastic name and the Père had long discussions on religious subjects and the spiritual life, and on sects and creeds; on these occasions the Swami spoke eloquently to him of Vairâgyam and renunciation, and the old memories of monastic life were stirred up in the heart of the erstwhile monk. Later on, he with his wife accompanied the Swami and his party in their travels to Constantinople. They met again at Scutari in Asia Minor, whither the Père had proceeded on his journey to Jerusalem to bring about a her duty—to keep him from too great an abstraction of mind. Whenever he was her guest, she made him feel that he was free to come and go as the spirit moved him. Others would ply him with questions, but not Miss MacLeod. Her buoyant nature amused him. Yet sometimes he would pour forth in her presence some of the most soul-inspiring utterances of his whole life. From the first she "recognised" the Swami as a Messenger of the Spirit, a Christ-Soul, and became an ardent champion of his cause. She had already studied the Gita and her vision was moulded according to its teaching. She came to India as we have seen from America in company with Mrs. Ole Bull and the Swami Saradananda and with other Western disciples, spent many days with the Swami, living in the neighbourhood of the monastery at Belur. To her he was Master and friend in one; and to this day her memories of the Swami are numerous and interesting.

After almost three months' sojourn in France, the Swami left Paris on the night of October 24, by the Oriental Express Train. His companions were Monsieur and Madame Loyson, M. Jules Bois, Madame Calvé and Miss Josephine MacLeod. Madame Calvé had decided not to sing that winter but to rest in the temperate climate of Egypt, and the Swami went as her guest. On the evening of the twenty-fifth the party reached Vienna, where a stop of three days was made. Here the many places of interest were visited, notably the Schönbrunn Palace, near Vienna, where Napoleon's son had been kept almost as a prisoner, and had died of a broken heart,—an episode immortalised in a play, named L'aiglon (the Young Eagle), which the Swami had recently seen played by Sarah Bernhardt. He was interested in finding that every room of this

Palace was furnished and decorated with the art and workmanship of some special country. India and China had not been forgotten, and he was specially pleased with the Indian decorations. The museum was also visited, and its scientific section and Dutch paintings were especially interesting. But all other cities of Europe after Paris were disappointing to him. Of Austria he remarked, "If Turkey is called 'The sick man of Europe,' Austria ought to be called, 'The sick woman of Europe!'"

On October 28, the party took the Oriental Express for Constantinople which they reached on the thirtieth, having passed through Hungary, Servia, Roumania and Bulgaria *en route*. When they arrived they had trouble with the customs which confiscated all their books and papers. After heated discussion and pulling of wires by Madame Calvé and Jules Bois, all but two of the books were returned.

The day after their arrival in Constantinople the Swami and Miss MacLeod decided to visit Scutari, which lies across the strip of water that separates Europe from Asia Minor, and see Père Hyacinthe who was on his way to Palestine. Some difficulty was experienced because neither could speak Turkish nor Arabic. By signs they managed to hire a boat to take them to Scutari, where the Swami visited Père Hyacinthe. That day he had his meal in the Scutari cemetery, no better place being found. The trip back to Constantinople proved somewhat difficult, as the boat in which they had come was found only after a long search, and they were landed on the opposite shore far from their hotel. The Swami made his stay in Constantinople useful in various ways; every centre of interest was visited; he saw the museum, the sarcophagi, the charming scenery from the top of the place from which the daily gun was fired, the foreign quarters, and the old wall within which was the dreaded jail.

He met several distinguished persons, both in Vienna and in Constantinople, through the letters of introduction he had brought with him from Mr. Maxim. Thus in Constantinople he dined with a French *Chargé d' affaires,* made the acquaintance of a Greek Pasha and also of an Albanian celebrity. As Père Hyacinthe was not permitted to speak publicly in Constantinople, the Swami also was denied permission to do so. Several private conversaziones and drawing-room lectures were, however, arranged for him, at which he spoke on the religion of the Vedânta to select audiences.

After several days in Constantinople the Swami and his friends took steamer for Athens, seeing the Golden Horn and the Islands of Marmora *en route,* where he visited a Greek monastery and was much impressed with what he saw. On one of the islands he met the distinguished Prof. Lepper, whom he had known when he was a Professor in the Pachiappa's College in Madras. In another of these islands he saw the ruins of a temple on the seashore, which he thought must have been dedicated to Neptune.

Four days after he had arrived in Athens, the Swami embarked on the Russian steamer *Czar* for Egypt. In Egypt he was especially interested in the Cairo museum, and his mind often reverted, in all the vividness of his historic imagination, to the reigns of those Pharaohs who had made Egypt mighty and a world-power in the days of old. And yet, in his inmost heart, he was withdrawn from all external matters. The underlying vanity of everything had made him reflect powerfully on the terrible bondage of Mâyâ. The Sphinx and the Pyramids brought on, as it were, a world-weariness. The meditative habit, which had revealed itself ever since his second visit to the West in intenser forms, now reached a veritable climax. In Paris, oftentimes his mind had been far aloof from his environment; and here in Egypt it seemed as if he were turning the last pages in the Book of Experience. Even the days spent on the Nile amidst the glories of ancient temples and rich scenery did not affect him. And one who was with him at the time said: "How tired and world-weary he seemed!"

And then there were other reasons! In far-off India Mr. Sevier, his great friend and disciple, had left the body; and the Swami had perceived this intuitively. He became restless to return to India. Thus one day quite suddenly he told his companions that he would depart for India. They were all saddened at this news. Madame Calvé using a Roman Catholic expression had always addressed him as *Mon Père,* "My Father." To Miss MacLeod he was Guru and friend in one, to Monsieur Bois he was a great thinker and Man of God. So it was with a feeling, partly of sadness and partly of resignation, that they saw him last when he extended his hands to them in a final benediction.

He boarded the first steamer for India, a Peninsular and Oriental vessel. When the steamer touched the shores of India, he was beside himself with joy. His longing to be with his Gurubhais and disciples was now about to be realised. His home-coming was entirely *incognito.* Only, on the way from Bombay to Calcutta did he meet with Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya. They stared at each other for a moment in astonishment and entered into joyous conversation.

Late at night on December 9, 1900, the Swami arrived at the Belur monastery. His brother-monks and the Brahmachârins were taking their meal, when the gardener out of breath came running in to tell them, "A Saheb has come!" Immediately there was much excitement and speculation as to who the Saheb might be who had come at that late hour and what his business with them could be. Then to their great surprise the Saheb rushed into their midst; and when they all saw who the Saheb was, there was no sleeping that night. "O Swamiji has come! Swamiji has come!" they all cried out excitedly. They could not believe their eyes. At once an Asana (seat) was spread for him and he was served with a large helping of the Khichrhi which was the food prepared for that night. He partook of it with great zest, as it was many months since he had tasted it. Later the monks enjoyed several delightful hours, while the Swami chatted to them about his varied experiences in the West. They were happy beyond measure. He had come back to them, altogether unexpectedly. No words can describe their feeling. And now, though they knew it not, he was to be with them till the end.

The Swami said that when he had first visited the Occident, he was impressed with its power and organisation and its apparent democracy; but now he saw that its commercial spirit was composed for the most part of greed, selfishness, and struggle for privilege and power. He was averse to the system of exploitation by which small business interests could be swallowed up by large combinations; that was tyranny indeed. "A strong combination he was able to admire, but what beauty of combination was there, amongst a pack of wolves?" He said to someone that his riper experience of Western life made it appear to him "like hell," and he held that China had gone nearer to the ideal conception of human ethics than newer countries had ever done or could do.

Before closing the chapter it will be interesting to know Sister Nivedita's impression of the Swami's bearing during his last visit to the West. She says:

"The outstanding impression made by the Swami's bearing, during all these months of European and American life, was one of almost complete indifference to his surroundings. Current estimates of value left him entirely unaffected. He was never in any way startled or incredulous under success, being too deeply convinced of the greatness of the Power that worked through him, to be surprised by it. But neither was he unnerved by external failure. Both victory and defeat would come and go. He was their witness. . . .

"He moved fearless and unhesitant through the luxury of the West. As determinedly as I had seen him in India, dressed in the two garments of simple folk, sitting on the floor and eating with his fingers, so, equally without doubt or shrinking, was his acceptance of the complexity of the means of living in America or France. Monk and king, he said, was obverse and reverse of a single model. From the use of the best, to the renunciation of all, was but one step. India had thrown all her prestige in the past, round poverty. Some prestige was in the future to be cast round wealth.

"Rapid changes of fortune, however, must always be the fate of one who wanders from door to door, accepting the hospitality of foreign peoples. These reversals he never seemed to notice. No institution, no environment, stood between him and any human heart. His confidence in that Divine-within-Man of which he talked, was as perfect, and his appeal as direct, when he talked with the imperialist aristocrat or the American millionaire, as with the exploited and oppressed. But the outflow of his love and courtesy was always for the simple.

"Thus, student and citizen of the world as others were proud to claim him, it was yet always on the glory of his Indian birth that he took his stand. And in the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk who stood revealed."

XXXVII

VISIT TO MAYAVATI

Before taking up the work that awaited him on his return to India, his first object was to visit Mrs. Sevier at the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama. On his arrival at the Math on December 9, he had the confirmation of his premonition of the passing away of his beloved disciple, Mr. J. H. Sevier, which had occurred on October 28, 1900. He at once telegraphed to Mrs. Sevier to say that he would be going to Mayavati, the date to be made known before starting. In reply he was asked to inform her of the date of his coming at least eight days beforehand, to enable the Brotherhood to make the necessary arrangements. But the intimation about the Swami's arrival at Kathgodam railway station reached Mayavati at the eleventh hour. It was with great difficulty that the coolies and the Dandy-bearers were secured by the inmates of the Ashrama.

The Swami arrived at Kathgodam on the morning of the twenty-ninth in company with Swamis Sivananda and Sadananda. The Swami was feverish and was advised to rest for the day here, before undertaking the hardships of a hill journey. He could not have chosen a worse time for going to the hills. The winter of 1900-1901 was unusually severe, and particularly so during the days of his visit. The journey from the railway station to Mayavati—a distance of sixty-five miles—was by no means a pleasant one. There was a heavy snow-fall on the way. But the Swami kept the whole party in high spirits in spite of the bad weather.

The Swami with his party arrived at Mayavati on January 3, 1901. When he caught a view of the site of the Ashrama and its buildings, he was much pleased. As he came to the stream in the cañyon below, he heard the bell of the monastery striking twelve, and he was so anxious to reach the Ashrama that he mounted a horse and pressed on at full speed. The monastery had been artistically decorated for the occasion with evergreens and flowers.

Unfortunately most of the time during the Swami's stay Mayavati was covered with snow, so that he was compelled to remain indoors and could not take the long walks he enjoyed so much. He remained at Mayavati till the eighteenth, and received a number of visitors from the neighbouring places. It was evident that the Swami was in declining health. In spite of his high spirits, it could be seen that he was unable to stand any physical strain and several times he had slight attacks of asthma; yet he was only thirty-eight years of age.

His conversations were a constant source of inspiration to the Mayavati Brotherhood. One day in the course of a talk he suddenly got up from his seat and paced to and fro, with his voice raised and eyes aflame with emotion, as if he was lecturing to a huge audience. He was speaking of his Western disciples, of their exemplary devotion and loyalty to him, their readiness to rush into the jaws of death at his command,—and not one or two but dozens who would do the same,—how they had served him lovingly, silently, right royally, and how they were ready to renounce everything for his sake, at one word from him. "Look at Captain Sevier," cried the Swami, "how he died a martyr to the cause, at Mayavati!" On another occasion, speaking of obedience, he said: "Obedience and respect cannot be enforced by word of command; neither can it be exacted. It depends upon the *man*, upon his loving nature and exalted character. None can resist true love and greatness.'' At the same time he emphasised the necessity of loyalty to the work undertaken, loyalty to the organisation and loyalty to the man who is placed in charge of a centre.

One day he told Swami Swarupananda of his ideas about the work that he wished to be carried out at the Ashrama, and charged him to push on with them with great zeal and energy. The latter said that as for himself he would do all he could, but without the co-operation of the brother-monks of the Ashrama and their assurance of remaining for at least three consecutive years, the task was beyond his powers. The Swami understood and when all were gathered before him he broached the subject asking one after the other if he were willing to stay three years. All but Swami Virajananda acceded. When his turn came he humbly but firmly said that he intended to pass some time exclusively in meditation elsewhere, living upon Mâdhukari Bhikshâ. The Swami tried to dissuade him saying: ''Don't ruin your health by practising austerities, but try to profit by our experience. We have subjected ourselves to extreme austerities, but what has been the result?—the break-down of our health in the prime of manhood, for which we are still suffering. Besides, how can you think of meditating for hours? Enough if you can concentrate your mind for five minutes, or even one minute; for that purpose only certain hours in the morning and evening are needed. The rest of the time you will have to engage yourself in studies or some work for the general good. My disciples must emphasise work more than austerities. Work itself should be a part of their Sâdhanâ and their austerities." Swami Virajananda admitted the truth of his Master's words, but respectfully submitted that for all that, austerity was needed to gain strength of character and to conserve the spiritual powers, which were imperative if one were to work without attachment. When he left the place the Swami acknowledged that at heart he knew that Swami Virajananda was right and appreciated his feelings, for he himself valued the life of meditation and the freedom of the monk. Recalling the memories of his Parivrâjaka days,—living on Bhikshâ, with the mind fixed on God and having no thought of the world, he declared that they were the happiest and sweetest days of his life, and that he would gladly give up anything in exchange for that obscurity that frees one from the cares and worries of public life.

Of the many points of view that one gains of the snows at Mayavati, that at Dharamghar, the highest hill within the Mayavati boundaries, affords the finest vision of the snow range. Here, shortly after his arrival, the Swami spent one morning with the inmates of the monastery. He was so pleased with the site and its charming scenery that he wished to have a hermitage erected on that very spot, where he could meditate in solitude undisturbed. His favourite walk was along the lake-side and one day he said to Mrs. Sevier, "In the latter part of my life, I shall give up all public work and pass my days in writing books and whistling merry tunes by this lake, free as a child!"

A shrine room containing the image of Sri Ramakrishna had recently been established at the Ashrama at the earnest desire of some of the inmates. One morning the Swami chanced to go into this room and saw that regular Pujâ was being conducted with flowers, incense and other offerings. He said nothing at the time, but that evening when all were gathered about the fireplace, he spoke vehemently, disapproving of ceremonial worship in an Advaita Ashrama. It should never have been done. Here attention was to be paid only to the subjective elements of religion, such as private meditation, individual and collective study of the scriptures, and the teaching and culture of the highest spiritual monism, free from any dualistic weakness or dependence. This Ashrama had been dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone. He had therefore the right to criticise. Though the Swami was emphatic in his criticism of the introduction of ritualistic worship there, he did not order them to break up the worship-room. He would not hurt the feelings of those who were responsible for it. That would be using his power. They ought to see their own mistake and rectify it. But the Swami's uncompromising attitude on the matter led to the discontinuance of the worship and, ultimately, to the dissolution of the shrine itself. One who still doubted if it was right for him to profess himself a member of the Advaita Ashrama when he leaned towards Dualism, appealed to the Holy Mother as a final resource, only to receive the reply: "Sri Ramakrishna was all Advaita and preached Advaita. Why should you not also follow Advaita? All his disciples *are* Advaitins!" When the Swami returned to the Belur Math, in alluding to the above occurrence he remarked: "I thought of having one centre at least where the external worship of Sri Ramakrishna would not find a place. But going there I found that the Old Man had already established himself even there! Well, well!"

The Swami was by no means idle at Mayavati. His correspondence was very large. Besides, he gave religious instruction to the inmates and wrote three essays for the *Prabuddha Bharata,* entitled "Aryans and Tamilians," "The Social Conference Address," and "Stray Remarks on Theosophy." The first of these articles shows remarkable historical insight. The second was a reply to Mr. Justice Ranade's Presidential Address at the Indian Social Conference of 1900. While admitting the remarkable liberalism and sincere patriotism which characterised the spirit of the great Marhatta leader, the Swami in this article denounces his criticism of the Sannyâsins. It is a passionate defence of Indian monasticism and of its intrinsic value in the light of Indian history. His "Stray Remarks on Theosophy" is a sincere and interesting criticism. Besides these, he made an excellent translation of the Nâsadiya Sukta of the Rig Veda at the special request of a friend, a distinguished man of science.

While the Swami was at Mayavati, the disciples out of their great love for their Guru served him in every possible way. Realising how difficult it is for a Westerner to understand the Hindu viewpoint as regards service to the Guru, he explained to a certain American disciple: "You see how they serve me! To a Westerner, this devotion may seem servile, and you may be shocked at the way I accept all this service without remonstrance. But you must understand the Indian idea, then everything will be clear to you. This is the spontaneous devotion of the disciple to the Guru. This service to the Guru is one of the means by which the disciple progresses in spirituality."

The Swami was confined to the house most of the time because of the snow, and as his physical condition was not strong enough to bear the severe cold, he became impatient to go down to the plains, and soon left for Pilibhit.

All the way from Mayavati to Pilibhit the Swami was in excellent spirits. On the first night, at the Dak-bungalow at Champawat he talked with great fervour of Sri Ramakrishna, especially of his inner sight and of his judgment of men, and said that whatsoever his Master had predicted about men and matters, had invariably come to pass. Therefore, so far as his Gurubhais were concerned, his entire attitude was always influenced by what Sri Ramakrishna had said of them. Speaking of those few whom Sri Ramakrishna had specially classified as Isvarakotis, the Swami said that he had, by his own insight and repeated tests, satisfied himself as to their superior intrinsic excellence. He added that though he might not always approve of their ways and opinions, and even might say harsh words to them now and then, yet in his heart he always gave them a much higher position than to the others, because Sri Ramakrishna himself had done so, and this judgment he accepted as unerring and unassailable. Repeatedly he exclaimed: "And above all, above all, I am *loyal*! I am loyal to the core of my heart!"

On another occasion, speaking of the Isvarakotis, the Swami had said, "I can trust in them as I can in no one else. I know that even if the whole world were to desert me, they would stick to me and be ever faithful and ready to carry out my ideas and plans, even under the most impossible conditions." Sri Ramakrishna had marked out seven of his disciples as Isvarakotis. Isvarakotis, according to him, are those who have to take birth whenever an Incarnation is born; they are like His high officials belonging to the inmost circle of His devotees, His Antaranga Bhaktas, whose mission in life is to complement His work, and to conserve His teachings. Thus, strictly speaking, though they are born with Realisation, they have no Mukti, and their Sâdhanâs are, unconsciously intended only for the instruction of men. At the head of this class Sri Ramakrishna placed the Swami.

At Tanakpur riding-ponies were secured, for there was no railway from Tanakpur to Pilibhit at the time. Before reaching Pilibhit the Swami informed Swami Sivananda that he would have to leave them at Pilibhit and go forth by himself to beg money for the maintenance and improvement of the Belur Math. In this connection he said: "Each member of the Belur Math should go about preaching and teaching in India, and bring to the general fund at least two thousand rupees." Swami Sivananda bowed in assent to the command.

The Swami arrived at the Belur Math on January 24, 1901. About everything concerning the Advaita Ashrama, the Swami gave the highest praise. Its charming scenery, the precious soothing quiet of the Himalayan jungles, the loving kindness he had received from Mrs. Sevier, the unremitting service which had been so devoutly rendered him by the little band of disciples at his Himalayan centre—all these things, and many more, had made his visit to Mayavati a very happy one. In fact, he regretted that he had had to leave the hills so soon.

XXXVIII

A TRIP TO EAST BENGAL AND LIFE AT THE MATH

When the Swami arrived at Calcutta from Mayavati, on January 24, 1901, it was a great rejoicing to his Gurubhais and disciples there, who were anxious to have him again in their midst for a long period. Before leaving for Mayavati, the Swami had remained at the Belur monastery for eighteen days. This gave him, however, the opportunity to see the remarkable progress made in all directions during his absence in the West. Classes of various kinds were held, physical exercises were introduced, and there were appointed hours for meditation and spiritual exercise. New Brahmachârins had joined the Order, and his own disciples and Gurubhais were strenuously occupied in studying, teaching, training and serving.

Once more with his followers and workers, the Swami's mind was full of plans, but he had been in the monastery barely seven weeks, when such pressing invitations came from Dacca and East Bengal that they could not be declined. In addition, there was the great desire of his own mother to go on a pilgrimage to the holy places in East Bengal and Assam. Still another reason for going was his declining health. Only those immediately about him knew how rapidly his health was going down. He himself saw that in his present condition, work of any kind requiring great concentration of mind and energy of will was impossible for him. The time he remained in Calcutta, therefore, he spent either at the monastery or at Balaram Babu's house in Baghbazar in the metropolis, his sole occupation being the private training and teaching of those about him, light reading or replying to correspondents from various quarters of the world.

It was on March 18, that the Swami left Calcutta in company with a large party of his Sannyâsin disciples. He arrived at Dacca on the next day. As soon as the steamer from Goalando reached Narayangunj, some resident gentlemen of Dacca, who had come as representatives of the reception committee, welcomed him cordially. When the train reached Dacca, Babu Ishwar Chandra Ghosh, the renowned pleader, and Babu Gagan Chandra Ghosh received him in the name of the people of the city. The railway station was filled with people who greeted him with enthusiastic shouts of "Victory to Ramakrishna Deva!" Many students of the various educational institutions of the city were present. The procession led through the main thoroughfares until it finally reached the mansion of the late Babu Mohini Mohan Das, Zamindar, which was arranged for the Swami's use during his sojourn in Dacca. Here scores of citizens had gathered to get a sight of the Swami.

As the Budhâshtami festival, an auspicious day for the Hindus, was near at hand, the Swami went by boat to Lângalbundh with his disciples and his mother's party of women-pilgrims, to bathe there in the Brahmaputra river. Tradition has sanctified Langalbundh, as Pourânic legends connect it with Sri Parasurâma. The festival draws large crowds, and from the passenger-boats go forth continuously joyous shouts of praise in honour of the Lord.

Both before and after his pilgrimage, his dwelling-place at Dacca was besieged by numerous visitors. To these he gave instructions at all hours of the day, particularly for two or three hours in the afternoon. More than a hundred persons attended these informal meetings daily. All were impressed by his gracious manner and charming personality, and found his teachings full of a living faith and devotion, and infused with intense vitality and power.

At the earnest request of the people of Dacca, the Swami lectured for an hour at the Jagannath College before two thousand people, taking for his subject, "What Have I Learnt?" The next day he again lectured for about two hours in the open maidan, adjoining the Pogose School to an audience of three thousand on "The Religion We Are Born In." Both the addresses were received with tremendous applause, and as a result hundreds were led to make a diligent study of his message and his plans for the amelioration of India.

A touching incident happened while the Swami was at Dacca. One day a young prostitute bedecked with jewellery came in a phæton with her mother to see him. Jatin Babu, the host, and the disciples hesitated to admit them at first; word of their coming was brought to the Swami, and he at once accorded them an interview. After they had saluted him and sat down, the daughter told the Swami that she was suffering from asthma and begged him for some medicine to cure her. The Swami expressed his sympathy and replied: "See here, mother! I too am suffering from asthma and have not been able to cure myself. I wish I could do something for you." These words spoken with childlike simplicity and loving kindness touched the women as well as the audience.

From Dacca he next proceeded to the famous places of pilgrimage, Chandranâth and Kâmâkhya, sojourning for some days at Goalpara and at the beautiful station of Gauhati in Assam. At Gauhati he delivered three lectures.

Both at Dacca and later at Kamakhya, the Swami's health went from bad to worse. He decided to go to the delightful hill-station of Shillong, where the air being much drier, it was thought his health might improve. Shillong was then the seat of the Assam Government, and the late Sir H. E. A. Cotton, a champion of the cause of India, was the Chief Commissioner. He had heard much of Swami Vivekananda and was anxious to meet him. At his request, the Swami delivered a lecture before the resident English officials and a large gathering of Indians. Later, Sir Henry Cotton visited the Swami, exchanged greetings and spent some time in an interesting discussion about India and the solution of her national problems. Seeing that the Swami was ill, he instructed the Civil Surgeon to render him every possible medical aid. Throughout the Swami's long stay, the Chief Commissioner made daily inquiries about his health. The Swami spoke of him as a man who understood India's needs and aspirations and worked nobly for her cause and deserved the love of the Indian people.

The Swami's health was failing rapidly. Besides diabetes from which he had been suffering, he had had at Dacca another very severe attack of asthma. His disciples were very anxious when it was discovered that the climate of Shillong had done him no good. During the asthmatic attack, the Swami said half-dreamily, as if to himself: "What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years!" He felt that he could die in peace now that he had given his message to the world, and that if the Western nations accepted his spiritual ideals and India adopted his plans for her regeneration, there was work ahead of both sufficient for fifteen hundred years.

The Swami returned to the monastery at Calcutta in the second week of May. Of his experience in East Bengal and Assam he spoke much. In religious matters, he remarked, the people of those parts were very conservative, and even fanatical in some respects. Though his disciples observed the strictest orthodoxy there, he himself when plied with too many questions by a Don't-touchist told him, "Man, I am a Fakir! What is caste or custom to me! Does not the Sâstra enjoin: 'A Sannyâsin may live on Mâdhukari received even from the hands of a person of a Mlechchha family?'"

Speaking of fanaticism he related the story of a sentimental youth of Dacca, who showed the Swami a photograph asking him if the original was an Avatâra. "My boy, how can I know?" answered the Swami. But the boy repeated his question three or four times. "At last," narrated the Swami, "seeing that he desired an affirmative answer, I said, 'My boy, take my advice; develop your muscles and your brain by eating good food and by healthy exercise, and then you will be able to think for yourself. Without nourishing food your brain seems to be a little weak.' Perhaps the boy did not like to be told the plain truth. But what else could I do? Unless I warn such people they may become unbalanced."

"You may think of your Guru as an Avatâra," continued the Swami, "or whatever you like. But Incarnations of God are few and far between. There have arisen in Dacca itself three or four Avatâras, I heard! Indeed, there is a craze for them nowadays, it seems!"

Speaking of the physical aspects of the two provinces and of the people, he remarked that the Brahmaputra valley was beyond compare in beauty and that the beauty of the Shillong hills was charming. The people were much hardier and more active in type than those on the Calcutta side. What they did, they did in a dogged fashion. Though they took more of flesh and fish, and for that reason were stronger and more Râjasic than the West Bengal type, they used altogether too much oil and Ghee in their cooking, a thing which the Swami did not approve of, because it tended to obesity. He also observed that it was most desirable that the East and the West Bengal should be thoroughly harmonised and united.

One of the lay disciples questioned the Swami whether he had visited the home of Nag Mahasaya. The Swami replied most enthusiastically: "Yes, indeed! He was such a great saint! Is it likely that, being so near his birth-place, which is only seven or eight miles from Dacca, I would have failed to visit the house in which he had lived? How charming is his house, just like a peace retreat, a veritable place of pilgrimage! His worthy wife fed me with many excellent dishes cooked by her own hands. She was very motherly and insisted that I must eat to my heart's content. While there I had a swim in the tank, after which I had such a sound sleep that it was half-past-two in the afternoon before I awoke. Such sound sleep I have rarely experienced in my life. On getting up I had a sumptuous feast. Nag Mahasaya's wife gave me a cloth also, which I tied round my head as a turban and started for Dacca. I found that Nag Mahasaya's photo was being worshipped. The place of his Samâdhi, the spot where his ashes are kept, ought to be preserved in a better way than they are now. East Bengal will do well to study and appreciate that great soul, who has sanctified the whole province by his birth, and by living that wonderful life there.''

After his return from the tour in East Bengal and Assam, which was the last public tour undertaken by the Swami, he was much worse in health. The monks were much concerned. They now urged him to have complete rest; they begged him to give up all thought of appearing before the public until he should be perfectly well. So the Swami, to please his Gurubhais and disciples, gave up his plans and lived at the monastery for seven months in comparative retirement. Those about him did all they could to nurse him back to health, to obtain for him the best medical treatment available, and to divert his mind to lighter subjects. But they found that the latter was an exceedingly difficult task, for his mind instinctively merged in the deepest concentration. Casual teaching he was always engaged in, even at this period. He also kept himself in touch with the general movement of his work in various parts of the world and was happy at the thought that everywhere, whether in America, or England or India itself, his ideas were gaining firmer ground. Oftentimes he would sing and teach his disciples to sing; or he would engage in conversation, now on gay and now on serious subjects. But on the latter occasions, his Gurubhais would immediately divert his mind to lighter matters, to relax its tension.

People flocked to the Belur monastery in these days from all parts of India to receive the Swami's blessings and instructions. His eyes watched all the manifold works of the Math to their minutest details, and even the servants he treated as his own kin. They vied with one another in rendering him even the slightest service. And whenever he went to Calcutta by boat, the rowers were as much interested in his personality as his own disciples. Sometimes he would go about in the monastery, with only a Kaupina on. Or in the long robe of the wandering monk he would stroll, immersed in thought, along the village-paths that led from the monastery gates to the high road. Or again, he would seat himself to meditate wherever he happened to be, by the Ganges, or under the spreading branches of some inviting tree in the monastery compound. Or it might be that he would spend the day in Calcutta, or with books in his own room at the Math. And often he would return to those fiery moods of old and make the monastery throb with his spiritual consciousness.

His more intimate discourses with his Gurubhais and disciples were of a most diverse and complex character. They included such topics as renunciation, Brahmacharya and the making of Real Men for the regeneration of the motherland, the music and literature of India, points of contact and contrast between European and Asiatic Art, Gurukula system, Nirvikalpa Samâdhi, presence of Divinity even in the lowest, eradication of Don't-touchism and God's mercy. These themes and others similar to these formed generally the topics which were both an instruction and a delight to his listeners. In fact, his discourses included the whole range of Hindu religion, philosophy, sociology, science and numerous other branches of knowledge, on which he dwelt in a masterly way throwing new light on them.

Often the Swami would be lost in song or meditation, dwelling in regions beyond this world. And yet on many days he himself would supervise the cooking arrangements and prepare delicacies for the inmates of the monastery. Now he would be visited by deeper moods brought on by thoughts of India and her problems, and in these moods he would make some casual remark that vibrated with great power. His remarks on even trifling matters would make the monks ponder over them. At all times he was an amazing personality, of which each new manifestation was, to those who loved him, both human and divine. Now he would explain an idea, making opposite sides equally convincing; again he would be the monk, the patriot, the scholar, or the saint. And all marvelled at the tremendous insight, partly inherent, partly acquired through the intensest study and observation, which he manifested in spite of his illness. Though his body was giving way to illness, his mind was luminous, and the brother disciples stood in awe of him in spite of the fact that they still regarded him as their "Naren." Disease might have ruined the body, but it could never touch the mind or the soul. As is the case with diabetes, he had periods of relief from pain and the sense of great exhaustion, and there were times when he felt as well as ever. At such moments particularly, his Gurubhais and friends implored him to rest. But he heeded their words only temporarily. It would have been much easier to move a mountain than to keep in check that mind which had taught the world. Besides, it was evident that his interest in life was waning. And his words, spoken in former times, came often to the minds of the disciples, "For one thing we may be grateful; this life is *not* eternal!" Through the very power of his thought he was loosening himself from the trammels of the body, and the time when he would give it up altogether was drawing very close.

He would sit in the upper verandah of the monastery, gazing intently at the turrets of the temple of the Mother, which loomed high above the trees of that grove of many memories at Dakshineswar. Lost in contemplation, his face would be ineffably sad or luminous with ecstasy. To the outside world, he was the famous Vivekananda, the preacher, the teacher and the patriot; to his brother-monks he was the monk, the saint, the leader, the friend, the master, the beloved one, the son of Sri Ramakrishna and the Mother,—their all-in-all.

Sometimes after a walk on the lawn of the monastery he would sit under the Vilva tree by which now stands his memorial temple, to rest or to meditate, and on many occasions he would lose consciousness of the outer world. Another favourite seat was under the big mango tree in the courtyard between Sri Ramakrishna's chapel and the monastery building. Here he would be found mostly in the morning hours seated on a canvas cot, attending to his correspondence, writing articles or books, reading, or engaged in conversation.

The Swami's room was on the second storey in the south-east corner of the monastery building. It was a large room with four windows and three doors, at one and the same time his study and living quarters. In the corner to the right of the entrance-door stood a mirror some five feet high, and a little further on, a rack with his Geruâ clothes. In the middle of the room was an iron bedstead fitted with a spring mattress, given to him by one of his Western disciples. But the Swami hardly used it preferring a simple bed on the floor. A couch, a knee-hole writing-table with letters and manuscripts, pen, ink, paper, a blotting-pad, a call-bell, some flowers in a metal vase, a photograph of the Master, a deer-skin Asana, and a small table with a set of porcelain tea-cups, saucers and plates completed the furnishings of the room. Most of these things were the gifts and presents from his Western disciples, and are now treasured at the Math with great care. But the most important object in the whole room was a picture of Sri Ramakrishna at which the Swami would gaze in love and reverence. In this room he wrote, he gave instructions to his brother-monks and disciples, he received his friends, he sometimes had his meals, he slept, he meditated and communed with God. And here, also, he passed from his mortal form in the final meditation of his life. Now the room is regarded as most sacred; every thing in it is kept in the very same order as it was on the last day of his life. The calendar on the wall reads "July 4, 1902." The writing-table appears as though he had just risen from it to go perhaps to the chapel near by. On the rack still hang his Geruâ robes. Only on the walls and upon the couch and the beds the pictures of the Swami have been placed, and a life-size oil-painting of Sri Ramakrishna has also been added in a prominent place on the wall. The room is used for meditation. He who enters it bows down in reverence. And thousands upon thousands have come to visit it, for it speaks of the tenderness, greatness and power of him whose spirit has set their souls aflame.

The Swami loved the monastery and its surroundings. He loved his room. He was always glad to come back to it either from the West, or after his travels in India, or even after a short absence in Calcutta. In a letter dated December 19, 1900, he wrote to an American disciple:

> "Verily, I am a bird of passage! Gay and busy Paris, grim old Constantinople, sparkling little Athens and Pyramidal Cairo are left behind, and here I am now, writing in my room in the Math on the Ganges. It is so quiet and still! The broad river is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo boat breaking the silence with the splashing of the oars. It is the cold season here. . . . Everything is green and gold. . . . and the air is cold and crisp and delightful."

Aye, the Swami loved the monastery and its silence and peace. He loved his brother-monks, his disciples and the many friends and visitors who came to see the Math and to listen to his words. But sometimes he was in a strange mood, demanding solitude, when none dared to approach him, and he would remain alone for hours.

He was always frank and free, ruling not so much by authority as by the vigorous power of his personality and love. He would sing Kirtanas with his brother-monks, or pace the monastery grounds lost in contemplation. On festival days he would join as the Leader in their spiritual exercises, play on musical instruments with them, and sing with them in spiritual joy in his sweet and thrilling voice for hours. He was the Leader in all things, the *life-centre* of the monastery.

And he would often joke and make fun with his Gurubhais and tease them and make them laugh. At other times he would instruct them or help them in their difficulties, always manifesting the greatest tenderness. Though he might reprimand them, to others he always spoke of them with the greatest regard, for they were the sons of the Master and he was privileged to be the servant of them all. He was the irresistible magnet and they were as so many iron filings drawn towards him, often without understanding why, but always loving him.

He would rouse the monks from sleep in the early hours of the mornings. He himself was always an early riser. He would order them to see that the regulations were strictly observed and followed. Any infringement of the monastery rules would make him indignant. He would make them practise austerities, but he would see that they did not go too far. His love would not allow them to suffer. It was all excitement, activity, spiritual fervour and great training at the monastery.

The garden, the cooking, the care of the cows which the monastery kept, in fact, the very simplest things interested him. And to this day the monks recall how like a boy he would dispute with Swami Brahmananda with regard to the boundaries that separated the pasturefield for the cows from the latter's vegetable and flower gardens, and the alleged trespassing from one side or the other! Sometimes he would experiment on bread-making, trying all sorts of yeast, undaunted by repeated failures. He attributed the unhealthy climate of the Math to the want of pure water for drinking and cooking purposes, the river water being too dirty, especially during the rains. In order to have a supply of pure water all the year round, he attempted with the help of his fellow-monks to sink an artesian well, for which he had bought the necessary appliances. At other times, dressed in his Geruâ Alkhalla and Sâdhu's cap and carrying a thick stick, he would call a number of his Gurubhais and disciples to go out for a walk with him, and would be as gay as ever at such times.

After coming back from East Bengal the Swami gave up all public work and devoted himself to a number of pets collected from various sources, including Bâghâ the Math dog, a she-goat which he playfully called "Hansi," or "Swan," several cows, sheep, ducks, geese, an antelope, a stork, and a kid which he named "Mâtru" and on the neck of which he placed a string of tiny jingling bells. Wherever he went the kid accompanied him. And those who came to the Math in great reverence to see the man who had captured the Parliament of Religions and vindicated spirituality to the East and the West, were overcome with a wonderful love for his sweet human personality when they found him playing and running hither and thither to amuse his favourite kid. When it died he grieved like a child, and told his disciple Sarat Chandra, "How strange! Whomsoever I love dies early!" He himself would see that the animals were properly fed and their places kept clean and dry, and in this Swami Sadananda was his chief helper. These animals loved the Swami exceedingly, and he would talk to them as though they were actually human. And once he said playfully that Matru was really a relation of his in a former existence; the kid had access to his room and used to sleep on a couch there as though it had every right to do so. Sometimes the Swami would go to "Hansi" and beg her for milk for his tea, as though she could refuse or give as she chose. In a letter to an American lady disciple, dated September 7, 1901, he writes referring to his pets:

> "The rains have come down now in right earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring, pouring, night and day. The river is rising, flooding the banks; the ponds and tanks have overflowed. I have just now returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water from the Math grounds. The rain-water stands at places several feet deep. My huge stork is full of glee and so are the ducks and geese. My tame antelope fled from the Math and gave us some days of anxiety in finding him out. One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday. She had been gasping for breath more than a week. One of my waggish old monks says, 'Sir, it is no use living in the Kali Yuga when ducks catch cold from damp and rain and frogs sneeze.' One of the geese was losing her feathers. Knowing no other method of treatment, I left her some minutes in a tub of water mixed with a mild carbolic, so that it might either kill or heal,—and she is all right now."

In one sense Bagha was the master of the group of animals at the Math; he felt that the monastery was his by right. Once he was taken across the

Ganges for some gross misconduct, and left there. But he jumped on the ferry-boat that evening, glaring and growling so savagely at the boatman and the passengers when they tried to dislodge him, that they did not dare dispute his right to remain, and the next morning the Swami, going to his bath-room at about four o'clock as usual, stumbled upon him as he lay at his door. The Swami patted him on the back and assured him of protection. Later he told the monks that whatever Bagha might do, he should never be sent away again. The animal seemed to know that it was to the Swami he must go for forgiveness, and that if he permitted him to stay, he would not be sent away whatever others might say or do.

There are many strange stories current in the Math about Bagha. For instance: As soon as the gongs and conchshells proclaimed the beginning or the end of an eclipse, he in common with hundreds of devout men and women would take a dip in the Ganges of his own accord! Long after the Swami's passing away when Bagha died, the body was thrown in a remote part of the Math grounds on the bank of the Ganges, and was carried away by the high tide, only to be washed back there. Whereupon a Brahmachârin asked permission of the elders, which was granted, to inter the body in the Math grounds, and a pile of bricks still marks the spot.

Here in the monastery the Swami was free from the monotony of society, and its tiresome conventionalities. He was free to walk about barefooted or with plain slippers on, Hookah or staff in hand. Here he was free of the coat, vest, trousers and particularly the collar (which had always fretted him) of his Western experience. With a Kaupina or piece of Geruâ cloth he could live in a world of his own, in monastic silence and seclusion, his own element.

When the monks sat down to meals, the beloved Leader often joined them, bringing and sharing with them some of the dainties which his rich disciples had sent for him. And there was light-hearted talk at these meals and the Swami was always in the lead. Truly, they were all happy sons of the Master. The austerities they practised, the religious study and meditation in which they passed their days, their conversations, their purity of character,—all these were imbued with the Spirit of the Great Illumination of the Man of Dakshineswar, in which their Leader had shared, and the nature of which was Absolute Freedom and Immortal Bliss.

As the days passed and that final event of his life, the Mahâsamâdhi, drew nearer the Swami revealed himself more and more as the monk.

His illness was on the increase, and was causing great anxiety. He suffered much from general dropsy. His feet especially were swollen, making it difficult for him to walk. Those who served him say that his body became so sensitive that anything but the slightest touch caused him acute pain. Sleep almost deserted him in the last year of his life. But he was always resigned to the will of the Lord, and in spite of his illness was ever cheerful and ready to receive friends and visitors and talk with them with his characteristic fire and eloquence, though sometimes in a somewhat subdued tone. His disciple Sarat Chandra, who came to see him at this time enquired about his health. The Swami softly replied: "Why ask any more about health, my boy? Every day the body is getting more and more out of order. Born in Bengal, never has this body been free from disease. This province is not at all good for the physique. As soon as you begin to work hard the body, unable to bear the strain, breaks down. The few days more that it lasts, I shall continue to work for you all, and die in harness."

When urged to take rest for some months he said: "My son, there is no rest for me. That which Sri Ramakrishna called 'Kali,' took possession of my body and soul three or four days before his passing away. *That* makes me work and work, and never lets me keep still or look to my personal comfort." On request he told of that great event of his life in these words:

"Three or four days before the Master's passing, he called me to his side when alone, and making me sit before him gazed intently into my eyes and entered into Samâdhi. I then actually perceived a powerful current of subtle force like electricity entering into me from his body. After a time I too lost all outward consciousness and was merged in Samâdhi. How long I was in that state I cannot say. When I came down to the sense-plane, I found the Master crying. On being asked he said with great tenderness, 'O my Naren! I have now become a Fakir by giving away my all and everything to you! By the force of this Sakti, you will do many great things in this world, and only after that will you go back!' It seems to me that it is that *Power* which makes me work and work, whirling me, as it were, into its vortex. This body is not made for sitting idle."

Throughout July and August of the year 1901 the Swami took as much rest as he could, and as its result, in September he was somewhat better.

After the establishment of the permanent home of the Order at Belur, the bigoted and orthodox people of the neighbouring villages who were ignorant of their Sâstras, used to pass biting criticisms about the Swami and the monks for their novel ideas, their liberal ways of living and modes of work, and especially for their non-observance of the restrictions of caste, custom and food. They even invented lies about them and cast malicious aspersions and doubts as to their purity of character. These calumnies were made by them particularly on the boats plying between Calcutta and Bally, when they found passengers going to or coming from the Math. When the Swami heard about them, he merely observed: "You know the old proverb, 'The elephant goes through the Bazaar and hundreds of dogs follow barking after him.' The Sâdhu is never affected if the world abuses him." Or: "It is a law of nature that whensoever new ideas are preached in any country, the adherents of the old rise against them. Every founder of religion has had to pass this test. Without persecution higher ideas cannot enter the core of society." Hence he regarded opposition and adverse criticism as actual helps to the spreading of his ideas, and he neither defended himself nor allowed any one of his followers or friends to do so. He exhorted them: "Go on doing your work disinterestedly and without attachment; it will surely some time bear fruit." Or "The doer of good never meets with disaster," he would say. This criticism of his work gradually died out even before the passing of the Swami, the performance of the Durgâ Pujâ in the Math in strict orthodox style contributing a good deal towards that end.

It must be remembered that if the Swami preached liberal ideas in social matters, he was at the same time most orthodox in religious matters. In the latter part of the year 1901, he observed all the religious festivals. Several months before the Durgâ Pujâ in 1901 which occurred that year in October, he had secured from his disciple Sarat Chandra a copy of Raghunandan's 'Twenty-eight Tattvas,' otherwise called 'Raghunandan's Smriti,' which he consulted in order to perform the Durgâ Pujâ that year in strict conformity with its injunctions. He did not mention his desire to anyone at the Math until ten or twelve days before the festival. About this time one of his Gurubhais dreamt that the ten-armed Mother was coming across the Ganges towards the Math from the direction of Dakshineswar. On the following day the Swami spoke of his intention, whereupon the Gurubhai told him of his dream. This settled the question, and the Swami with the Swami Premananda went to Calcutta to ask the permission of the Holy Mother about certain observances in connection with the Pujâ. The Holy Mother approved and the Swami at once gave orders for an image to be made, and then returned to the Math. The news spread rapidly all over the city and the householder disciples gladly joined with the Sannyâsins in making the celebration a success.

On the northern part of the lawn where Sri Ramakrishna's birthday festival is held, a temporary shed was constructed for the installation and worship of the Mother.

Under the able management of Swami Brahmananda, the Math was furnished with all sorts of Pujâ requisites and abundant foodstuffs for feasts. The garden-house of Babu Nilambar Mukherjee near by was rented for a month for the accommodation of the Holy Mother who came to live there with several women-devotees the day previous to the Pujâ, so that she could be present throughout the entire festival.

Ishwar Chandra Bhattacharya, father of Swami Ramakrishnananda, a devout Brâhmana, well versed in the Tantras and Mantras, became the Tantradhâraka, that is, director of the worship of the Goddess in strict accordance with Sâstric injunctions.

To feed the poor sumptuously was the chief function in connection with this Pujâ, and hundreds came throughout the three days of the ceremony and were lavishly served with Prasâd. Special invitations were sent to some of the Brâhmanas and Pandits of Belur and Dakshineswar to join in the Pujâ. After this celebration the orthodox members of the community lost their animosity and were convinced that the monks were truly Hindu Sannyâsins.

On the night of the Saptami, the first day of the Pujâ proper, the Swami had an attack of fever, which prevented him from joining in it the next morning. But he rose from his bed and slowly came down to attend the Sandhipujâ, the most important and solemn function of the whole Pujâ, and made three offerings of flowers etc., at the feet of the Mother. On the next day, the Navami, he was well, and at night sang a few of those songs to the Mother which Sri Ramakrishna used to sing on such occasions.

On the Vijaya Dasami day, the image was consigned to the Ganges at nightfall, and the Holy Mother who was highly pleased at the way in which the Pujâ was celebrated, returned to her residence at Baghbazar after blessing the Sannyâsins.

The Durga Pujâ in the image is the national festival of Bengal corresponding to the Christmas of Christian lands. It is the one annual event to which every Hindu looks forward with great joy, as the Mother is believed then to come down from Her icy abode in Mount Kailas with Her consort Siva and Her household of Immortals, to live three days with Her mortal children and bestow Her blessings on them. The balmy autumn air, the green fields and meadows with the paddies waving their laden heads, the shining rivers and the bedewed trees,—all these seem to all Hindus to herald the coming of the Mother amongst them. Presents are exchanged among friends and relations, boys and girls are given new clothes. Food and clothes are distributed to the poor and to the servants of households, and hundreds of invitations are issued to friends and acquaintances to join in the Pujâ. The houses in which the Pujâ is celebrated are decorated; and for many days previous, songs to the Mother are sung in joyous anticipation of Her coming, or in sending out a welcome to Her. And Her beautifully decorated image, represented with one foot on the lion and the other on the shoulder of the demon Mahishâsura, in a death struggle with Her, and surrounded by Her celestial sons and daughters—Kartick, the warrior-god, Ganes, the giver of success, Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune and Saraswati, the goddess of learning,—is an actual living Presence to Her devout worshippers. One has to live in a Hindu household where the Pujâ is celebrated, in order to understand how great is the Hindu's faith in Her as the destroyer of distress and difficulty. And the Vijaya Dasami day in Bengal is the day of universal rejoicing, of exchange of greetings and salutations, of goodwill and fellow-feeling, when the high and the low, forgetting their differences of social position and caste, and even enemies forgetting their animosities, clasp each other in warm embrace.

That same year the Swami also performed the Lakshmi Pujâ and the Kâli Pujâ in images, both being celebrated in the monastery in strict accordance with Sâstric rites. After the Kâli Pujâ his mother sent him word that when he was a child he was once seriously ill, and that on that occasion she had taken a vow to offer special worship to Mother Kâli and literally make him roll on the ground before Her, in case he should recover. She had forgotten all about it all these years, but his recurring illness now recalled to her mind this long-forgotten vow. Though the Swami was ill at that time he went to the Kalighat temple in order to please his mother. He bathed in the Ganges and in obedience to her wishes came all the way to the temple in his wet clothes and rolled thrice on the ground before the Mother. After offering worship he walked round the temple seven times and then, in the open compound on the western side of the Nâtmandir, he himself performed Homa before the Mother. Returning from Kalighat, the Swami spoke of the liberal spirit of the temple-priests. Though they knew that he had crossed the seas,—an act most unorthodox in their eyes,—they raised no objection. "On the other hand," he said, "they welcomed me warmly into the temple and helped me to worship the Mother in any way I liked."

The Swami by worshipping images has shown that even this form of worship of the Divine is not wrong. An out and out Advaitin, he, like the great Sankaracharya, had great devotion for these personal aspects of Godhead. As the sun in the evening sky, touched by clouds of various shapes, displays an infinite variety of fascinating colours, so the illumined soul of Vivekananda, like that of his Master, swayed by different religious feelings, revealed to others a wonderful variety of forms of God-vision. But in that variety they saw the play of the One Infinite only—a state of realisation beyond all intellectual understanding.

XXXIX

TOWARDS THE END

In October 1901 the Swami's condition again became serious, and Dr. Saunders, a noted physician of Calcutta, was called in. The Swami was ordered to abandon even the slightest exertion and to give up all intellectual work. Not long after the doctor's visit he was confined to his bed,—a fact which distressed him as he was eager to be up and doing. From this time onwards the monks cautioned one another and all the visitors that came, to abstain from any serious conversation with him; and if in his talks the Swami drifted to any serious subject, they would object. Whenever he felt better, he busied himself with some manual work or other. Sometimes he would hoe the grounds of the Math, sometimes he would plant fruit-trees and flower plants, or sow vegetable seeds, and watch their growth with boyish interest.

In these days an incident occurred which exhibited the marvellous faith and Yoga power of the Swami. His disciple, Swami Nirbhayananda, was in delirium from high fever, and all hope of his recovery was abandoned. The fever rose to 107 degrees. The Swami was very anxious. Finally, seized by a sudden intuition, he went to the shrine of the monastery to worship Sri Ramakrishna and after washing the casket containing the relics of Sri Ramakrishna, he brought the sacred water to the sick monk to drink. The fever abated suddenly. The Swami, turning to his Gurubhais and disciples, said with great joy, "Behold the power of Sri Ramakrishna! What wonders can he not work!"

A spiritual experience of a very striking character which the Swami had, and which made a profound impression on all those who came to know of it, was the fulfilment of a test in regard to the actual Presence of Sri Ramakrishna in the monastery chapel. It occurred shortly after his return from his last visit to the West. The reliquary of the Master is regarded by his devotees as his Living Presence. The Swami sometimes called it "Atmârâma's Kauta." One day doubt entered his mind and he asked himself, "Does Sri Ramakrishna really reside here? I must test it!" Then he prayed, "My Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, if thou art really present here, then bring hither within three days the Maharaja of Gwalior who has come to Calcutta on a short visit!" He knew that the chance of the Prince's coming was very remote. He mentioned his prayer to none and indeed, later on, forgot all about it. The next day, returning in the evening from Calcutta where he had gone for a few hours on some business, he learned that the Maharaja of Gwalior was actually prepared to call on him. He had deputed his brother to see if the Swami was at the Math, and in case of his not being there to leave word that he wished very much to see the Swami, but as he was leaving Calcutta the next day, he would reserve the pleasure of seeing him for some other occasion. As soon as the Swami heard this news, he remembered his test, and literally running up the stairs to the shrine, bowed his head repeatedly before the altar containing the sacred casket. Swami Premananda who was at that time meditating there, was bewildered. Then the Swami narrated to him and to the assembled monks, all about the test and all marvelled at this proof of the Presence of the Lord in the chapel.

If the Swami had critics he had also staunch friends and admirers among the most representative of his countrymen. During the session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Calcutta that year in the latter part of December, scores of distinguished delegates from different provinces availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the monastery and pay their homage to Swami Vivekananda whom they regarded as the Patriot-Saint of Modern India. He often spoke with them in Hindi instead of in English, and invariably made a great impression on them.

Among the ideas which he discussed with the leaders of the Congress was the founding of a Vedic Institution to train teachers and preserve the ancient Aryan culture and Sanskrit learning. The delegates were in fervent sympathy with this plan.

This desire to found a Vedic college was cherished by the Swami to the very end, and even on the last day of his life, he was seen speaking to a Gurubhai on the need of Vedic study. In order to secure funds to commence this work early on a small scale, he instructed Swami Trigunatita to dispose of the Udbodhan Press. This, however, did not take a practical shape as the Swami passed away before he could do anything in this direction.

Towards the end of the year two learned and influential men from Japan visited the Math. They had come especially to interview the Swami in order to induce him to appear before a Congress of Religions that was being contemplated at the time in Japan. They said: "If such a distinguished person as you take part in the Congress, it will be a success. You must come and help us. Japan stands in need of a religious awakening, and we do not know of anyone else who can bring about this much-desired consummation." The speaker was the Rev. Oda, the abbot of a Buddhist monastery in Japan. The Swami seeing his marked sincerity, as well as that of his companion, Mr. Okakura, became enthusiastic, and consented. Though his health was very bad at the time, he did not mind it, so long as he could be of service to humanity. With them he talked on the glorious life of the Lord Buddha and the philosophical side of his teachings, with such fervour, devotion and insight that they simply marvelled. There was a boy named Hari who had accompanied the elders to India. Mr. Okakura and Hari were made comfortable as the guests of the monastery. They loved the Swami dearly, who moved with them freely and joined the boy in his boyish hobbies. Later the news of the death of Hari while travelling in India, deeply affected the Swami. Mr. Okakura requested the Swami to accompany him to Buddha Gaya; and as the Swami desired to visit Benares and had already made arrangements for his stay there at Gopal Lal Villa, he accepted the invitation of his Japanese friend, saying, "It would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you to the place where the Tathâgata attained Nirvâna, and after that to go on a pilgrimage to Benares where the Buddha first preached his Gospel unto man. Besides, Benares has for me a special attraction!"

Reflecting on this visit, Sister Nivedita has written:

> "When the winter again set in, he (the Swami) was so ill as to be confined to bed.
>
> "Yet he made one more journey, lasting through January and February 1902, when he went first to Buddha Gaya and next to Benares. It was a fit ending to all his wanderings. He arrived at Buddha Gaya on the morning of his last birthday, and nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and hospitality of the Mahunta. Here, as afterwards at Benares, the confidence and affection of the orthodox world were brought to him in

such measure and freedom that he himself stood amazed at the extent of his empire in men's hearts. Buddha Gaya, as it was now the last, had also been the first, of the holy places he had set out to visit. And it had been in Benares some few years back, (when he was an unknown monk,) that he had said farewell to one, with the words, 'Till that day when I fall on society like a thunderbolt I shall visit this place no more!' "

From Buddha Gaya the Swami went on to Benares where he hoped the dry climate would improve his health. Mr. Okakura parted from him there, after getting his promise that he would soon let him know definitely when he would sail for Japan.

In Benares he was again the centre of attraction for numerous persons. The Mahuntas and orthodox Pandits who came to see him, became his great admirers, in spite of his sweeping ideas in the restatement and reform of Hindu culture, and the fact that he had crossed the seas. He met here the Maharaja of Bhinga, who begged him to establish a monastery of the Order in the Holy City, offering him a certain sum of money for its maintenance for one year and assuring him of his further support. The Swami promised that he would do so, and on his return to Calcutta sent Swami Sivananda with a disciple to open an Ashrama there. Many times he went on an afternoon trip on the Ganges, and on a few occasions, when his health permitted, he bathed in its waters, and then, as a common pilgrim, visited the holy temples, particularly that of Visvanath. He kept himself in touch also with affairs in Calcutta and his other Indian centres. One of his letters indicative of his true historical and archæological spirit, shows that he was bestowing much thought at the time on Buddhism. It reads:

" My dear Swarupananda,

". . . . In answer to C—'s letter, tell him to study the

Brahma Sutras himself. What does he mean by the Brahma Sutras containing references to Buddhism? He means the Bhâshyas (commentaries), of course, or rather ought to mean, and Sankara was only the last Bhâshyakâra (commentator). There are references though in Buddhistic literature to Vedânta, and the Mahâyâna school of Buddhism is even non-Advaitistic. Why does Amara Singha, a Buddhist, give as one of the names of Buddha 'Advayavadi'? C— writes, the word Brahman does not occur in the Upanishads! *Quel betise!*

"I hold the Mahâyâna to be the older of the two schools of Buddhism.

"The theory of Mâyâ is as old as the Rik Samhitâ. The Svetâsvatara Upanishad contains the word 'Mâyâ' which is developed out of Prakriti. I hold that Upanishad to be at least older than Buddhism.

"I have had much light of late about Buddhism, and I am ready to prove that—(1) Siva-worship, in various forms, antedated the Buddhists, that the Buddhists tried to get hold of the sacred places of the Saivas, but failing in that, made new places in the precincts, just as you find now at Buddha Gaya and Sarnath (Benares).

"(2) The story in the Agni Purâna about Gayâsura does not refer to Buddha at all—as Dr. Rajendralala will have it,—but simply to a pre-existing story.

"(3) That Buddha went to live on Gayâsirsha mountain proves the pre-existence of that place.

"(4) Gaya was a place of ancestor-worship already, and the footprint-worship the Buddhists copied from the Hindus.

"(5) About Benares, even the oldest records go to prove it as the great place of Siva-worship, etc., etc.

"Many are the new facts I have gathered in Buddha Gaya and from Buddhist literature. Tell C— to read for himself, and not be swayed by foolish opinions. . . .

"A total revolution has occurred in my mind about the relation of Buddhism and Neo-Hinduism. I may not live to work out the glimpses, but I shall leave the lines of work indicated, and you and your brethren will have to work it out."

Under the inspiration of the Swami's teachings, several Bengali youths at Benares had formed themselves into a band to be of service to thousands of suffering pilgrims in that sacred city. They rented a small house and endeavoured with their limited means to provide proper food, shelter and medical aid to destitute pilgrims, helpless widows and aged persons lying ill in the streets and Ghats of the city. They worked with a zeal and a spirit of self-sacrifice, which recalled the days of St. Francis of Assisi. The Swami was delighted with the work they were doing and was proud of them. "You have the true spirit, my boys," he said, "and you have always my love and blessings! Go on bravely; never mind your poverty; money will come; a great thing will grow out of it surpassing your fondest hopes!" For their sake he wrote an appeal which was to accompany the first report of "The Ramakrishna Home of Service" as this new institution was called.

The Swami's stay in Benares was a very pleasant one. The dry climate relieved him of his asthmatic attacks; and amidst the temples and Sâdhus of the sacred city he felt himself to be dwelling in the Spirit. In his letters to Western disciples written from Benares he speaks of its shrines, its Ghats and its holiness. And those to whom these letters were written, were exceedingly glad to know that the Swami was somewhat better. He, however, returned to the Monastery at Belur shortly.

There were times, however, when the Swami, finding his body becoming more and more incapable of work, would become despondent, because only a few workers had come forward to help him. His hopes were centred in gathering together a number of intelligent young men who would renounce everything for the welfare of others, and who would lay down their lives in working out his ideas for their own good and for that of their country. He used to say that if he could get ten or twelve youths fired with a faith like that of Nachiketa, he could turn the whole current of thought and aspiration of his country into a new channel.

Speaking of this one day to Sarat Chandra, he suddenly exclaimed: "Keeping before you the national ideal of renunciation which comes out of devotion to the Lord, you have to work fearlessly with the strength of a lion, heedless of the fruits of action and without caring for criticism. Let Mahâvir be your ideal. See how with unbounded faith in the name of Rama he—the prince of the self-controlled ones, wise and sagacious—crossed the ocean in one bound, defying death! You have to mould your lives after that high ideal,—thinking yourselves the servants of the Lord." He condemned all weakening ideals in all departments of life including religion, and advocated in all spheres of activity, the expression of the loftiness of spirit which heroism breathes. "Only by following such an ideal of manliness can we ensure the welfare of our motherland. . . . But, mind you, never for a moment swerve an inch from the path of righteousness. Never let weakness overcome you."

Speaking in this strain the Swami came downstairs and sat on the canvas cot under the mango tree in the courtyard, facing the west, as he often used to do. His eyes were luminous; his whole frame seemed alive with some strange spiritual consciousness. Pointing to the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins about him, he exclaimed, "And where will you go to seek Brahman? He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman! Shame on those who disregarding the visible Brahman set their minds on other things! Here is the Brahman before you as tangible as a fruit in one's hand! Can't you see! Here—here—here is the Brahman!" He spoke these words in such an inspiring way that over all present there came the peace and insight of deep meditation. They stood like marble statues, so motionless and hushed in silence had they become! Swami Premananda after his bath in the Ganges was on his way to the chapel for worship. Hearing the words of his Gurubhai he fell into a trance and became motionless. After quarter of an hour the Swami said to him, "Now go for worship." Then only did the Swami Premananda regain his normal consciousness.

That scene was unforgettable. Everyone in the monastery was struck with amazement at the wonderful power of the beloved Leader who with but one word could raise the minds of all to the heights of Supreme Insight.

About this time, the latter part of the year 1901, a number of Santal labourers used to work in the Math grounds. The Swami would be talking with them and listening to their tales of woe. He found it a great relaxation from his work and tense state of mind. One day some gentlemen of wealth and position came to see him while he was talking with these poor labourers. When he was told of the arrival of the visitors, he said, "I shan't be able to go now. I am quite happy with these people!"

The Swami was especially fond of one of the Santals, Keshta by name. This man used to say, "O Swami, don't come to us when we are working, for we cannot work while we talk to you, and the supervising Swami takes us to task for not doing our full measure of work!" At these words the Swami was visibly affected, and assured them that Swami Advaitananda would not scold them. Sometimes the tale of their wants and miseries would move him to tears, when Keshta would say, "Now you must go, Swami! We won't tell you any more of our troubles, for it makes you weep!"

One day the Swami asked Keshta: "Would you all like to have a feast here?" The man replied, "Dear father, if we eat food cooked by you with salt we shall lose our caste!" On the Swami's insisting and finally saying that salt would not be mixed in the cooking but would be served to them separately, Keshta agreed. The menu included Puris, sweets, curd and a number of other delicacies. The Swami himself supervised the arrangements and the serving of food to his guests, who exclaimed from time to time, "O Swami, where did you get such fine things! We have never tasted such dishes before." When the meal was over, the Swami told them: "You are Narayanas; today I have entertained the Lord Himself by feeding you!" Later, to a disciple he remarked, "I actually saw the Lord Himself in them! How simple-hearted and guileless they are! Shortly after, to the Sannyâsins and the Brahmachârins of the Math he said:

"See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Can you mitigate their misery a little? If not, of what use is your wearing the Geruâ? Sacrificing everything for the good of others—this is true Sannyâsa. Sometimes I think within myself, 'What is the good of building monasteries and so forth! Why not sell them and distribute the money among the poor. What should we care for homes, we who have made the tree our shelter? Alas! How can we have the heart to put a morsel to our mouths, when our countrymen have not enough wherewith to feed or clothe themselves!' Let us, throwing away all pride of learning and study of the Sâstras and all Sâdhanâs for the attainment of personal Mukti, go from village to village devoting our lives to the service of the poor. Let us through the force of our character and spirituality and our austere living convince the rich man of his duty to the masses and induce him to give money for the service of the poor and the distressed.

Alas! Nobody in our country thinks of the low, the poor and the miserable! These are the backbone of the nation, whose labour produces our food. Where is the man in our country who sympathises with them, who shares in their joys and sorrows! Look, how for want of sympathy on the part of the Hindus, thousands of Pariahs in the Madras Presidency are becoming Christians! Don't think that it is merely the pinch of hunger that drives them to embrace Christianity. It is simply because they do not get your sympathy. Is there any fellow-feeling or sense of Dharma left in the country? There is only 'Don't-touchism' now! Kick out all such degrading usages! How I wish to demolish the barriers of 'Don't-touchism' and go out and bring together one and all, calling out, 'Come all ye that are poor and destitute, fallen and downtrodden! We are one in the name of Ramakrishna!' Unless they are raised, this motherland of ours will never awake! What are we good for if we cannot provide them with food and clothing! Alas! They are ignorant of the ways of the world, and hence fail to eke out a living, though they labour hard day and night for it. Gather all your forces together to remove the veil from their eyes. I see as clear as daylight that the same Brahman, the same Sakti that is in me is in them as well! Only, there is a difference in the degree of manifestation—that is all. In the whole history of the world have you ever seen a country rise without a free circulation of the national blood throughout its entire body? If one limb is paralysed, then even with the other limbs whole, not much can be done with that body—know this for certain."

A lay disciple said to the Swami, "It is too difficult a task, sir, to establish harmony and co-operation among all the varying religious sects and creeds that are current in this country, and to make them act in unison for a common purpose." Vexed at these words, the Swami said:

"Don't come here any more if you think any task too difficult. Through the grace of the Lord, everything becomes easy of achievement. Your duty is to serve the poor and the distressed, without distinction of caste and creed. What business have you to think of the fruits of your action? Your duty is to go on working and everything will follow of itself. My method of work is to construct, and not to destroy that which is already existing. Read the histories of the world and you will see that invariably, in every country, at some particular epoch, some great man has stood as the centre of its national life, influencing the people by his ideas. You are all intelligent boys, and profess to be my disciples,—tell me what you have done. Can't you give away one life for the sake of others? Let the reading of the Vedânta and the practising of meditation and the like be left for the next life! Let this body go in the service of others,—and then I shall know that your coming to me has not been in vain."

Later on, he said: "After so much Tapasyâ I have understood this as the highest truth: 'God is present in every being. There is no other God besides that. He who serves all beings serves God indeed!' "

The two above-mentioned incidents were typical of the many noteworthy occasions when the Swami, in spite of his illness and sufferings, rose to heights of amazing power, feeling and eloquence in giving his message to his disciples and countrymen, from the enforced seclusion of his monastery. No wonder that he would feel a reaction! But who could check that mighty flame within him, which must either burst out and set the souls of others on fire, or consume his whole being!

On the occasion of the birthday festival of Sri Ramakrishna, shortly after his return from Benares, the Swami was unable to leave his room. In fact, for some days previous he had been confined to his bed. His feet were swollen and he was almost unable to walk. A gloom was cast over the celebration by the announcement that his malady had taken a serious turn. The disappointment of the thousands who had come on this festive occasion was great, for they had anticipated the pleasure of seeing him and hearing his words; and for their sake the Swami thought several times in the morning of appearing in public. But he soon found that even the few visitors who had come to him in the early part of the day had tired him. So he decided to rest and ordered Swami Niranjanananda to keep guard and permit none to enter his room. The Gurubhai did as he was bidden. Only one lay disciple attended on the Swami. Seeing the Swami's state of health, the disciple was deeply affected. The Swami understanding his feelings said: "What is the use of giving way to sorrow, my boy? This body was born and it will die. If I have been able to instil into you all, even to a small degree, some of my ideas, then I shall know that I have not lived my life in vain! Always remember that renunciation is the root idea. Unless initiated into this idea, not even Brahmâ and the World-Gods have the power to attain Mukti."

He then became deeply absorbed in thought. After a while he observed: "I think that it will be better if from now the anniversary is celebrated in a different way. The celebration should extend to four or five days instead of one. On the first day, there may be study and interpretation of the scriptures; on the second, discussion on the Vedas and the Vedânta, and solution of the problems in connection with them; on the third day, there may be a question class; the fourth day may be fixed for lectures; and on the last day there will be a festival on the present lines."

When the Sankirtan parties arrived, he stood by the window on the southern side, supporting himself against its iron bars, and gazed lovingly on the assembled thousands. After a few minutes he was constrained to sit down again, as he was too weak to stand. He then spoke to the disciple on the realisation of the Self which comes out of devotion to the Lord who is born as a world-teacher from time to time. He also talked of the glory of the Avatâras or Incarnations of God, who alone can give Mukti to millions of souls even in one life by dispelling their ignorance.

He gave a beautiful explanation of what is meant by grace. He said: "He who has realised the Atman becomes a store-house of great power. From him as the centre and within a certain radius emanates a spiritual force, and all those who come within this circle become animated with his ideas and are overwhelmed by them. Thus without much religious striving they inherit the results of his wonderful spirituality. This is grace."

"Blessed are those," he continued, "who have seen Sri Ramakrishna. All of you also will get his vision. When you have come here, you are very near to him. Nobody has been able to understand who came on earth as Sri Ramakrishna. Even his own nearest devotees have got no real clue to it. Only some have got a little inkling of it. All will understand it in time."

Off and on during the last year and a half of his life the Swami was under strict medical orders. When he returned from Benares to be present at the festival of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday anniversary at the Belur Math, and to take up again, as he had hoped, his work of personal training and teaching, his health suffered a serious relapse. His Gurubhais became nervous over his condition. At the earnest entreaty of Swami Niranjanananda, in which all his other Gurubhais joined, he agreed to place himself under the treatment of an Ayurvedic practitioner, the well-known Kaviraj Mahananda Sen Gupta of Calcutta. The treatment was most rigorous; he was not allowed to drink water or take any salt. These instructions the Swami adhered to faithfully. Firstly, because he loved to feel the response of the body to the will, to realise his own command over it; secondly, because he felt that he must abide by the wishes of his Gurubhais; and lastly, for the sake of the work that was constantly opening up before him, he thought he should give a trial to any course of treatment to regain his health, though he was not himself very hopeful. To one he said in loving humility, "You see, I am simply obeying the orders of my Gurubhais. I could not disregard their request; they love me so dearly!" To a disciple who asked him, "Swamiji, how is it that in spite of the severe heat of the summer you can refrain from drinking water, when you were in the habit of drinking it hourly throughout the day?" he replied, "When I decided to begin the treatment, I imposed this vow upon myself, and now the water would not go down my throat. For twenty-one days I have refrained from water, and now in rinsing out my mouth I find that the muscles of my throat close of their own accord against the passage of a single drop. The body is only a servant of the mind. What the mind dictates the body will have to obey." After a few days of Ayurvedic treatment, he was able to say to his Gurubhais, "Now I do not even think of water. I do not miss it at all!" He was overjoyed to find that in spite of physical weakness and broken health, his strength of will remained. After more than two months' use of the Ayurvedic medicines he felt greatly benefited.

In spite of the severe restrictions of the treatment, a very spare diet and very little sleep, the natural glow of his countenance and the lustre of his eyes were undiminished, and he knew no respite from his labours. Shortly before beginning the treatment he had begun reading the newly published edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica. His disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, seeing one day those twenty-five large volumes remarked, "It is difficult to master the contents of so many volumes in one life." He did not know at the time that the Swami had already finished ten volumes and was reading the eleventh. "What do you mean?" said the Swami. "Ask me whatever you like from these ten volumes and I can tell you all about it." The disciple, out of curiosity, brought down the books and asked him many questions on difficult subjects, selecting one or two from every volume. Not only did the Swami answer the questions displaying a vast amount of even technical knowledge, but in many instances he quoted the very language of the books! The disciple was astounded at the extraordinary intelligence and memory of his Guru, and exclaimed, "This is beyond the power of man!" The Swami then told him that there was nothing miraculous about the matter, and that if one could only observe the strictest Brahmacharya, one could retain and reproduce exactly what one had heard or read but once, even if it were years ago. "For the lack of this Brahmacharya," he added, "we as a nation are becoming poorer and poorer in strength and intellect, and are losing our manhood."

After a while the Swami went on to explain to the disciple in the most lucid and convincing way the arguments advanced and conclusions arrived at by the different systems of Hindu philosophy. When the talk was going on, Swami Brahmananda came in and said to the disciple, "How inconsiderate you are! Swamiji is unwell, and you, instead of humouring him with light talk, as I told you to do, are tiring him out by making him speak on these abstruse subjects!" The disciple was abashed. But the Swami said to the Gurubhai, "Who cares for your medical restrictions and all that stuff! They are my sons; if in giving them instruction my body wears out, who cares a straw for that!"

The conversation afterwards turned on the topic of the Bengali poets. The Swami was very severe on Bhârat Chandra, one of the older Bengali poets, and praised Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *Meghanâdavadha Kâvya* as the greatest work of poetic genius in the Bengali literature, adding that it was difficult to find another epic poem even in the whole of Europe in modern times to match with it. "And do you know," he said in conclusion, "what portion of it I regard as the greatest creation of the poet? It is the scene in which Indrajit has been slain in battle, and Mandodari, the queen of King Râvana, stricken with sorrow at the loss of her valiant son, is imploring her husband to desist from battle; but Râvana, burning with pride, anger and revenge, like a great hero that he is, casting off from his heart all grief for his dead son, and without thought for the fate of his queen and other sons, is ready to go forth to battle. 'Come what may, let the universe remain or be broken up into fragments, I will not forget my duty!'—these are the words of a mighty hero!" Then he asked the disciple to bring the book from the Math library and read aloud that portion in a thrilling manner.

Another morning, in talking with the same disciple, he raised the question of establishing his much-desired Math for women somewhere near Calcutta, on the banks of the Ganges, on the same lines as the one for men, with the Holy Mother as its central figure and guiding spirit, so that Brahmachârinis and women-teachers might be trained there to work for the regeneration of their sex in India. In a long, enthusiastic talk he spoke in detail of his ideas about the nunnery, the means and methods of its action, the urgent need of starting centres all over the country for the education of Indian women on national lines, and the great results that would come out of such work in time.

Throughout 1901 and even up to his passing away in 1902, the Swami was eager to receive friends and visitors and instruct his disciples, notwithstanding the request of his Gurubhais to take rest, for, in the matter of teaching, he set no limits. Everything must be sacrificed, even the body itself. Sometimes hearing of the plight of earnest seekers who were refused admission to his presence by the monks, he would be so deeply moved with pity that he would say: "Look here! What good is this body! Let it go in helping others. Did not the Master preach unto the very end? And shall I not do the same? I do not care a straw if the body goes! You cannot imagine how happy I am when I find earnest seekers after truth to talk to. In the work of waking up the Atman in my fellowmen I shall gladly die again and again!"

Especially from the early part of March 1902 until his passing away, the Swami was busy in many ways. He did not mind even his illness when he was bent upon doing something. Even to the last day he himself conducted numerous scriptural and question classes at the monastery, and oftentimes the Brahmachârins and even his own Gurubhais came to him for spiritual advice. He would often explain the various methods of meditation, and train those who were backward in it. He spent hours in answering correspondence, or in reading, or making notes on Hindu philosophy or Indian history for publication; for recreation he would sing or discourse with his Gurubhais, giving himself up to fun and merriment. Oftentimes, in the midst of his talks his face would assume a dreamy far-away look, and then all would leave him, knowing that he wished to be left alone with his thoughts.

The Swami's eye saw everything that went on in the monastery, and he was very strict during these days in enforcing discipline. He insisted upon thorough cleanliness; when he found the floor covered with dust because of the servants' illness, he himself would sweep it, in order to teach the disciples the necessity of cleanliness, and would not surrender the broom to them. He would examine the beds and see that they were properly cared for and aired. If he found any carelessness in that respect, his reprimand was most severe. And once when Bagha, the Math dog, polluted the water brought for the Pujâ through the gross carelessness of one of the junior members, he was greatly vexed. He insisted that the classes on the Vedas and the Purânas should be held regularly. He allowed none of the members of the Order to rest after the noonday meal, making them commence at once the study of the Purânas.

The Swami abhorred extremes. He protested against the too elaborate paraphernalia of daily worship at the Math in the strongest terms and advised his disciples to devote more time to scriptural study, religious talks and discussions as well as to meditation, in order to mould their lives and understand the true spirit of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, and not waste their time over superfluous and minute details in conducting the worship. He felt that the Pujâ should be done in the simplest way with due devotion and fervour, and go hand in hand with meditation and study, and not be allowed to take up the whole time of the monks. In order to enforce this, he introduced the ringing of a bell at appointed hours when the monks had to leave whatever they might be doing to join the classes for study, discussion and meditation, and anyone failing to do so promptly was severely censured. Indeed, he was a loving and stern Guru, loved and feared at the same time by his disciples and Gurubhais. Throughout his stay at the Belur monastery, and especially during the last few months of his life, the Swami used to lay great stress on meditation. About three months before his death, he made a rule that at four o'clock in the morning a hand-bell should be rung from room to room to awaken the monks, and that within half an hour all should be gathered in the chapel to meditate. Over and above this, the Swami encouraged his disciples to practise austerities. Besides formulating a hard and fast daily routine for the monks, he had already written out, in the early part of the year 1898, a comprehensive set of rules and regulations, for the proper guidance of the monastic Order, wherein he had briefly set forth his principal ideas, methods and lines of work. This was to form the ideal of the Brotherhood, the carrying out of which in practice was to be the sole aim and endeavour of the monks. In his charge to the disciples he repeatedly pointed out that no monastic order could keep itself pure and retain its original vigour or its power of working for good, without a definite ideal to reach, without rigorous discipline and vows, and without keeping up culture and education within its fold. He also pointed out that had it not been for the severe austerities and Sâdhanâs practised by himself and the Brotherhood, both during the lifetime of their Master and after his Mahâsamâdhi, and had it not been for his divine life which stood as an example and ideal before them, they could not have achieved what they had done.

Thus everyone was bound by routine as regards eating, resting, helping in worship and household duties, study and meditation. There were also rules which the visitors and the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had to observe whenever they were at the monastery, so that their visits might not interrupt the activities of the monks. For the welfare of the Order he had sometimes to be harsh and severe in enforcing the observance of the daily routine, even though he occasionally incurred displeasure thereby.

The Swami's joy was great when meditation and austerities were in full swing. He would say to his old friends and lay disciples, "See how the Sâdhus are practising devotion here. That is right! In the morning and evening, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say, the mind turns naturally, when trained, to the highest spiritual thoughts, and it is therefore easier to control and concentrate it at these junctures. One should therefore try to meditate then on God with undivided attention!" What he preached, he practised. Whenever his health permitted,—and fortunately he was comparatively well at this time,—he joined in the morning meditation in the chapel. He used to rise at 3 a.m. In a prominent part of the worship-room a special seat was spread for him, facing the north. He meditated there with the others. No one was allowed to leave his seat until the Swami had risen. Oftentimes his meditation would last for more than two hours. Then he would get up chanting, 'Siva ! Siva !' and bowing to Sri Ramakrishna he would go downstairs and pace to and fro in the courtyard, singing a song to the Divine Mother or to Siva as he walked. His presence in the meditation-room invariably lent an added power and intensity to the meditations of those who sat with him. Swami Brahmananda once remarked, "Ah ! One at once becomes absorbed if one sits for meditation in company with Naren ! I do not feel this when I sit alone."

The days when the Swami could not join in the general meditation, he would make enquiries as to the attendance. Once, after an absence of many days, the Swami went into the worship-room at a time when the monks should have been meditating. It so happened that on that particular day many were absent ! The Swami was vexed at this lapse, and at once coming down called them all before him. He demanded an explanation, and on receiving no satisfactory answer, passed orders that as a penalty none of them except those who had been present at the meditation and two or three others who were ill at the time should be allowed to have meals at the Math on that day. He bade them go out for Mâdhukari Bhikshâ, or beg handfuls of rice and other foodstuff from the villagers and cook for themselves under the trees in the Math grounds. They were forbidden to go to their friends in Calcutta, from whom they might expect to have a hearty dinner. He spared none, not even the greatest of his Gurubhais, whom he otherwise treated with a special reverence. In order to ensure obedience, he ordered the one in charge of the store-room not to supply cooking materials that day. So most of them were obliged to go out for begging their food. But he could not bear to see his dear ones and those whom he respected begging their food, and he left for Calcutta on the pretext of business. He returned to the Math the next day, full of added love and kindness, and laughed at the queer experiences of some, or the better success of others, and rejoiced at the warm welcome and the sumptuous feast which some had received from some Marwari merchants of Salkhia, three miles distant from the monastery.

The days passed as though they were hours. Whatever the mood in which the Swami might be, for his Gurubhais and disciples his presence was in itself a constant source of joy and inspiration. Whether he was impatient, whether he reprimanded, whether he was exacting or unreasonable, whether he was the Teacher or the meditating Sage, whether he was full of mirth or grave,—to his Gurubhais he was always the *beloved* "Naren," and to his disciples the blessed and incomparable Guru. A well-known preacher speaking of the Swami in these days says:

> "At this time he began to feel that he had finished his public work and had delivered to the world the message of his blessed Master, Sri Ramakrishna. The inexhaustible energy and power that were working through the form now made him turn his attention to another work, the work of training the disciples and moulding the character of those that had gathered round him, by his living example as well as by his soul-stirring spiritual instructions. Silently ignoring his world-wide fame, he lived unostentatiously in the quiet monastery on the bank of the Ganges, sometimes playing the part of a Guru or spiritual teacher, sometimes that of a father, sometimes even that of a schoolmaster. Man-making was now the ideal of our illustrious Swami. He held classes on the Vedas and the grammar of Pânini, sat in meditation with the monks morning and evening, and received visitors from various parts of India. . . . His relation with those who came to him was of the

kindliest character. His all-embracing love was truly divine. To the visitors he was a personification of humility. . . . Through a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate masses of India, through a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity, and through true patriotism and thorough self-sacrificing zeal that did not know what fatigue was, he showed to his disciples how a God-inspired soul felt and worked for humanity. Like a cloud in the rainy season that silently deluges the world with water, he now worked silently and proved to his disciples that he was a real worker who *felt* the universal brotherhood of man, who did not talk much, who did not make little sects for universal brotherhood, but whose acts, whose whole body, whose movements, whose walking, eating, drinking, whose whole life manifested a true brotherhood of mankind, a real love and sympathy for all. By preaching Vedânta, by living and moving in Vedânta, by cosmopolitan charity, and by the simplicity, purity and holiness of his life, Swami Vivekananda solved the problem of the future of his Motherland by holding before the eyes of his disciples, followers, friends and admirers, nay, before even the whole of India, the ideal of character-building through the light and spirit of Vedânta."

XL

MAHASAMADHI

The last two months which the Swami passed on earth were full of events foreshadowing the approaching end, though at the time these events passed by unsuspected by those about him. Every trifling incident had its portent and a host of associations that throbbed with a peculiarly significant meaning. Some time after he had returned from Benares the Swami greatly desired to see all his Sannyâsin disciples, and wrote to them asking them to visit him, if only for a short time. The call came even to those beyond the seas. Some came; others busy at various centres could not avail themselves of what proved later on to be the last opportunity of seeing once again their beloved Leader, to whose cause they had dedicated their whole life and soul. And great indeed was their sorrow then. Oh, if they had but known what the call had meant, they would have left everything to respond to the summons.

Sister Nivedita, writing about it has said: "Many of his disciples from distant parts of the world gathered round the Swami on his return to Calcutta. Ill as he looked, there was none, probably, who suspected how near the end had come. Yet visits were paid and farewells exchanged that it had needed voyages half round the world to make."

Strangely enough, as days passed by, the Swami felt more and more the necessity of withdrawing himself from the task of directing the affairs of the Math, in order to give those that were about him a free hand. "How often," he said, "does a man ruin his disciples, by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves!" When he spoke thus, it invariably caused pain to those who loved him. They felt that if he should go, it would mean a terrible blow to the work. But there were times in his deep meditation, when the Swami cared for nothing but Infinite Repose. Work and all other bonds were dropping off; more than ever did he withdraw himself from all outer concerns. Meditation became his one great occupation. The Master and the Mother were constantly in his mind. A great Tapasyâ and meditation had come upon him and he was making ready for death. His Gurubhais and disciples became very anxious at seeing their beloved Leader retire into such an atmosphere of austerity and meditation. The prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna that Naren would merge in the Nirvikalpa Samâdhi at the end of his work, when he would realise who and what he really was and refuse to remain in the body, constantly haunted their memory. "Not long before his departure," writes Sister Nivedita, "some of his brother-monks were one day talking over the old days, and one of them asked him quite casually, 'Do you know yet who you were, Swamiji?' His unexpected reply, 'Yes, I know now!' awed them into silence, and none dared to question him further."

Everything about him in these days was so deliberate and full of meaning that it seemed strange that no one apprehended the true import. They must have been deceived by the Swami's cheerful bearing, and by the fact that since the beginning of June he seemed to have become himself again.

One day, about a week before the end, the Swami bade his disciple, Swami Suddhananda, to bring the

Bengali almanac to him. On getting it, he turned over several pages of it beginning at that day and kept it in his room. He was seen several times on subsequent days studying the almanac intently, as if he was undecided about something he wanted to know. Only after he had passed away was the significance of this incident understood by his sorrowing Gurubhais and disciples; then they realised that he had decided to throw off the bondage of the body on a certain day, and the day he chose of all others was the Fourth of July!

Three days before his passing away, as he was walking up and down on the spacious lawn of the monastery in the afternoon with Swami Premananda, the Swami pointed to a particular spot on the bank of the Ganges, and said to him gravely, "When I give up the body, cremate it there!" On that very spot stands today a temple in his honour.

Sister Nivedita, introducing many significant facts in connection with the Swami's passing away and his foreknowledge of it, writes:

> "When June closed, however, he knew well enough that the end was near. 'I am making ready for death!' he said to one who was with him, on the Wednesday before he died. 'A great Tapasya and meditation has come upon me, and I am making ready for death!'
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> "And we who did not dream that he would leave us, till at least some three or four years had passed, knew nevertheless that the words were true. News of the world met but a far-away rejoinder from him at this time. Even a word of anxiety as to the scarcity of the rains, seemed almost to pass him by as in a dream. It was useless to ask him now for an opinion on the questions of the day. 'You may be right,' he said quietly, 'but I cannot enter any more into these matters. I am going down into death!'
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> "Once in Kashmir, after an attack of illness, I had seen him lift a couple of pebbles, saying, 'Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor

doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that'*—and the stones struck one another in his hand—'for I *have* touched the Feet of God!'

"Personal revelation was so rare with him, that these words could never be forgotten. Again, on returning from the cave of Amarnath, in that same summer of 1898, had he not said, laughingly, that he had there received the grace of Amarnath—not to die till he himself should will to do so? Now this, seeming to promise that death would never take him by surprise, had corresponded so well with the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna—that when he should know who and what he was, he would refuse to remain a moment longer in the body—that one had banished from one's mind all anxiety on this score, and even his own grave and significant words at the present time did not suffice to revive it.

"Did we not remember, moreover, the story of the great Nirvikalpa Samâdhi of his youth, and how, when it was over, his Master had said, 'This is your mango. Look! I lock it in my box. You shall taste it once more, when your work is finished!'

" '—And we may wait for that,' said the monk who told me the tale. 'We shall know when the time is near. For he will tell us that again he has tasted his mango.'

"How strange it seems now, looking back on that time, to realise in how many ways the expected hint was given, only to fall on ears that did not hear, to reach minds that could not understand!

"It would seem, indeed, that in his withdrawal from all weakness and attachment, there was one exception. That which had ever been dearer to him than life, kept still its power to move him. It was on the last Sunday before the end that he said to one of his disciples, 'You know the WORK is always my weak point! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!'

"On Wednesday of the same week, the day being Ekâdashi, and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning meal to the same disciple. Each dish as it was offered—boiled seeds of the jack-fruit, boiled potatoes, plain rice, and ice-cold milk—formed the subject of playful chat; and finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands, and dried them with a towel.

" 'It is I who should do these things for you, Swamiji!

Not you for me!' was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity—'Jesus washed the *feet* of His disciples!'

"Something checked the answer, 'But that was the *last* time'' as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered. This was well. For here also, the last time had come.

"There was nothing sad or grave about the Swami during these days. In the midst of anxiety about over-fatiguing him, in spite of conversation deliberately kept as light as possible, touching only upon the animals that surrounded him, his garden experiments, books and absent friends, over and beyond all this, one was conscious the while of a luminous presence, of which his bodily form seemed only as a shadow, or symbol. Never had one felt so strongly as now, before him, that one stood on the threshold of an infinite light. Yet none was prepared, least of all on that last happy Friday, July the 4th, on which he appeared so much stronger and better than he had been for years, to see the end so soon."

On the day of the Mahâsamâdhi itself, whether consciously or intuitively, his actions were most deliberate and full of meaning. His solitary meditation for three hours in the morning from eight to eleven was the most striking. He rose rather early that day and after partaking of his tea entered the chapel of the monastery. After some time it was noticed that he had closed all the windows and had bolted all the doors. What transpired there, no one will ever know. In his meditation his own Master and the Divine Mother,—to his own realisation One and the Same Personality,—must have been present, for when he had finished he broke forth in a touching song in which the Highest Jnâna mingled with the Highest Bhakti.

Descending the stairs of the shrine, he walked backwards and forwards in the courtyard of the monastery, his mind withdrawn. Suddenly the tenseness of his thought expressed itself in a whisper loud enough to be heard by Swami Premananda who was near by. The Swami was saying to himself: "If there were another Vivekananda, he would have understood what Vivekananda has done! And yet,—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!!" This remark startled his Gurubhai, for never did the Swami speak thus, save when the flood-gates of his soul were thrown open and the Living Waters of the Highest Consciousness rushed forth.

Another unusual incident took place when the Swami, who was not in the habit of taking his food with his Gurubhais and disciples, dined with them in the refectory. Still more strange was his relish of food. He had never felt better, he said.

This same Friday morning he expressed a desire to have the Kâli Pujâ performed at the monastery on the following day, that being an auspicious day for the worship of the Mother. Soon after, Swami Ramakrishnananda's father, a devout worshipper of Kali, came. On seeing him, the Swami was delighted and explaining his intention to him, he called Swamis Suddhananda and Bodhananda and instructed them to secure all the necessaries for the intended ceremony, which they hastened to do.

The Swami then asked Swami Suddhananda to fetch the *Sukla Yajur Veda* from the library. When the latter had brought it, the Swami asked him to read therefrom the Mantra beginning with the words, "Sushumnah Suryarasmih," with the commentary on it. The disciple read the Sloka together with the commentary. When he had finished a part of it, the Swami remarked, "This interpretation of the passage does not appeal to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation of the word 'Sushumnâ,' the seed or the basis of what the Tantras, in the later ages, speak of as the Sushumnâ nerve channel in the body, is contained here, in this Vedic Mantra. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these Slokas and make original reflections and commentaries on the Sâstras."

The passage above referred to is the fortieth Sloka in the eighteenth chapter of Madhyandini recension of the *Vâjasaneyi Samhita* of the *Sukla Yajur Veda,* and runs as follows:

सुषुम्णाः सूर्यरश्मिश्चन्द्रमागन्धर्वस्तस्य नक्षत्राण्यप्सरसो भेकुरयो
नाम। सनइदंब्रह्मक्षत्रं पातु तस्मै स्वाहा वाट् ताभ्य स्वाहा॥

The purport of Mahidhara's commentary on this may be put as follows:

"That Chandra (Moon) who is of the form of Gandharva, who is Sushumnâ, that is, giver of supreme happiness to those who perform sacrifices (Yajnas), and whose rays are like the rays of the Sun,—may that Chandra protect us Brâhmanas and Kshatriyas! We offer our oblations to him (Svâhâ vât! His (Chandra's) Apsarâs are the stars, who are illuminators (hence called Bhekurayas)—we offer our oblations to them (Svâhâ)!"

At 1 p.m., a quarter of an hour after the midday repast, the Swami entered the Brahmachârins' room and called them to attend the class on Sanskrit grammar. One who attended this class writes:

"The class lasted for nearly three hours. But no monotony was felt. For he (the Swami) would tell a witty story, or make *bon mots* now and then to lighten his teachings, as he was wont to do. Sometimes the joke would be with reference to the wording of a certain Sutra, or he would make an amusing play upon its words knowing that the fun would make it easier for recollection. On this particular day, he spoke of how he had coached his college friend, Dasarathi Sanyal, in English history, in one night by following a similar process. He, however, appeared a little tired after the grammar class.

Some time later, the Swami, accompanied by Swami Premananda, went out for quite a long walk, as far as the Belur Bazaar. He spoke with his Gurubhai on many interesting subjects, and particularly on his proposed scheme of founding a Vedic college in the monastery. In order to gain a clearer view of what the Swami felt on the matter, Swami Premananda asked, "What, Swami, will be the good of studying the Vedas?" To this the Swami replied,—"It will kill out superstitions!"

Returning to the Math the Swami talked for a while with the monks. Oh, if they had but known that these were the last words they would ever hear from the lips of their beloved and blessed Leader, their all in all!

As evening came on, the Swami's mind became more and more withdrawn, and when the bell for the evening service rang, he retired in the evening stillness to his own room. There he sat in meditation facing the Ganges. What occurred on that memorable day has been best told in detail by some members of the Order, and a few of these different versions about the passing of the Swami are given below.

That written by Swami Saradananda on July 24, to Dr. Logan, the President of the San Francisco Vedânta Society, reads:

". . . We sent a cable to the New York Vedânta Society with directions to communicate to you, and to all friends in the United States, about the Nirvâna of our beloved Swami Vivekananda. He entered into the Life Eternal on July 4, Friday evening at ten minutes past nine. It came upon us so suddenly that even the Swamis in the rooms next to his in the Math had not the slightest intimation of it. The Swami was meditating in his own room at 7 p.m., leaving word that none was to come to him until called for. An hour after, he called one of us and requested him to fan his head. He lay down on his bed quietly and the one tending him thought he was either sleeping or meditating. An hour after, his hands trembled a little and he breathed once very deeply. Then all was quiet for a minute or two. Again he breathed in the same manner, his eyes becoming fixed in the centre of his eyebrows and his face assuming a divine expression, and all was over.

"All through the day he felt as free and easy as possible, nay, freer than what he had felt for the last six months. He meditated in the morning for three hours at a stretch, took his meals with a perfect appetite, gave talks on Sanskrit grammar, philosophy and on the Vedas to the Swamis at the Math for more than two hours and discoursed on the Yoga philosophy. He walked in the afternoon for about two miles, and on returning enquired after every one very tenderly. While resting for a time he conversed on the rise and fall of nations with his companions, and then went into his own room to meditate—you know the rest."

A monastic disciple of the Swami writes:

"The Mahâsamâdhi took place a few minutes after nine p. m. The supper bell had just been rung when the inmates were called to see what had happened to the Swami. Swamis Premananda and Nischayananda began to chant aloud the name of the Master, believing that he might be brought to consciousness thereby. But he lay there in his room on his back, motionless, and the course proved fruitless. Swami Advaitananda asked Swami Bodhananda to feel the Swami's pulse. After a vain attempt for a while, he stood up and began to cry aloud. Swami Advaitananda then told Nirbhayananda, 'Alas, what are you looking on! Hasten to Dr. Mahendra Nath Mazumdar and bring him here as soon as you can.' Another crossed the river and went to Calcutta to give information to Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda who were there on that day, and bring them to the Math. They arrived at about half past ten. The doctor examined him thoroughly, found life suspended, and tried to bring him back by artificial respiration. At midnight the doctor pronounced life extinct. Dr. Mazumdar said that it might have been due to sudden heart-failure. Dr. Bipin Bihari Ghosh who came from Calcutta the next day said that it was due to apoplexy. But none of the doctors who came afterwards and heard of the symptoms could agree. Whatever they might say, the monks of the Math have the unshakable conviction that the Swami had voluntarily cast off the body in Samâdhi, when he did not want to remain any longer in the world, as predicted by Sri Ramakrishna.

"Sister Nivedita came in the morning. She sat all the while by the Swami and fanned him, till the body was brought down at 2 p.m. to the porch leading to the courtyard, where the Aratrika was performed before taking it to the spot which had been indicated by the Swami himself for cremation."

A Gurubhai of the Swami writes in the *Udbodhan*:

". . . He next meditated from 8 to 11 a.m. in the shrine. On other days he never meditated so long at one sitting. Nor could he meditate in an unventilated room, with doors and windows shut; but on this day he meditated after having shut and bolted all the doors and windows of the chapel.

"After meditation he began to sing a beautiful song on Shyâmâ (Mother Kali). The monks below were charmed to hear the sweet strains of it coming from the shrine-room. The song ran thus, 'Is my Mother dark,—the dark-featured Mother, who has dishevelled hair, illumines the lotus of the heart! . . . ."

"He took his noonday meal that day with great relish. After meals he taught the disciples *Laghukaumudi,* a standard work on Sanskrit grammar, for more than two hours and a half. Then in the afternoon he took a walk for nearly two miles with a Gurubhai. For many days past he could not walk so far. He said he was very well that day. In the course of the walk he expressed his particular desire to establish a Vedic school in the Math. After returning from the walk, he attended to some personal needs and afterwards said that he felt very light in body. After conversation for some time, he went to his own room and told one of his disciples to bring him his rosary. Then, asking the disciple to wait outside, he sat down to tell his beads and meditate in the room alone. He had thought of worshipping Kali the next day, which was a Saturday with Amâvasyâ. He had talked much about this that day.

"After meditating and telling his beads for about an hour he laid himself down on his bed on the floor, and calling the disciple who was waiting outside, asked him to fan his head a little. He had the rosary still in his hand. The disciple thought the Swami was perhaps having a light sleep. About an hour later, his hand shook a little. Then came two deep breaths. The disciple thought he fell into Samâdhi. He then went downstairs and called a Sannyâsin, who came and found on examination that there was neither respiration nor pulse. Meanwhile another Sannyâsin came, and thinking him to be in Samâdhi, began to chant aloud the Master's name continually, but in no way was the Samâdhi broken! That night an eminent physician was called in. He examined the body for a long time and afterwards said that life was extinct.

"The next morning it was found that the eyes were bloodshot and that there was a little bleeding through the mouth and the nostrils. Other doctors remarked that it was due to the rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain. This clearly leads to the conclusion that in the process of Japa and meditation, his Brahmarandhra must have been pierced when he left the body!

"After his Mahâsamâdhi several doctors came and examined his body minutely and tried to bring him back to consciousness. They exhausted all the means and methods that they knew of rousing him but to no avail. They could not, in point of fact, make out the real cause of his death. He died, in truth, of his own accord. He was born a Yogi and he died a Yogi!"

Still another version reads:

". . . For a month before his passing away, the Swami used to meditate much more than usual; and on these days it seemed as if he had no disease in the body. . . . On this day before going for the afternoon walk with Swami Premananda he talked with him in a merry mood on various topics concerning the West. In the evening he went up to his room to meditate. After some time the Swami called in a disciple and asked him to open all the windows of the room as it was warm and to fan him. Next he laid himself down on the bedding on the floor. After the Brahmachârin had gently fanned him at the head for a while, the Swami said to him, 'All right; no more need of fanning! It would be better if you rubbed my feet a little.' Saying this, he seemed to have fallen asleep shortly after. In this way an hour passed; the disciple was rubbing him; the Swami was lying on his left side. He changed sides once within this time, and shortly after that, he cried in exactly the same way as babies cry out in dreams. The Brahmachârin noticed a little after this, that the Swami breathed a deep breath, and his head rolled down the pillow. Another long deep breath like the preceding one, and then all was calm and still about him like death! The tired child slept in the lap of the Mother, whence there was no awakening to this world of Mâyâ!

"The Swami passed away at the age of thirty-nine years, five months and twenty-four days, thus fulfilling a prophecy which was frequently on his lips, 'I shall never live to see forty.' "

A bolt from the blue could not have been more startling than the news of the death of Swami Vivekananda. Nothing could have been more appalling or unexpected. The monks at the monastery at Belur were struck dumb; they were stupefied at the thought of their bitter, irreparable loss. The monastery was shrouded in gloom.

In the morning people poured into the monastery from all sides. Carriages passed through the monastery gate and boats arrived at the Ghat bringing in a large number of passengers. Sadness reigned everywhere. The body lay in state in the room which only a day or two ago rang with the laughter and stirring eloquence of the inspired monk. Hundreds passed before the body in solemn silence, their eyes debating whether he was dead. Then they turned in a tempest of abandoned grief, from the lifeless form of him whom they had loved more than their own life, saying, "Is our Swami really gone?" And one looking at the face of Swami Vivekananda on this day, vowed then and there to devote his life thenceforth solely to the service of his country.

Not since the passing of their Master, Sri Ramakrishna, had the monks known such a bereavement. Never before had that undying scene of the cremation of the body of their Master at the burning-ghat in Baranagore, on the opposite bank of the Ganges, been brought so forcibly to their minds. They felt that the bottom had fallen out of everything. When the Master himself had passed away, he had given them to Naren's charge. Now that both had left the mortal plane, the monks felt themselves as strangers in the caravanserai of this world.

In spite of the conclusion of learned doctors, there was a half-mad and unreasonable hope that Swami Vivekananda might, after all, return to mortal consciousness. *Perhaps* this was the very highest Samâdhi; *perhaps* he might return from it. For this reason the body was left within the room upstairs until a late hour of the next day. But every moment the body became colder and more rigid and all were convinced beyond doubt that the Soul had sped forever into the regions of Everlasting Light and Life. When they were forced to believe that he was physically no more, the elder monks despatched some of the disciples to Calcutta to herald the news. Some were sent to telegraph the message to different parts of India and the world. Some were sent for sandalwood, incense, flowers, etc. Incense was burned in many quarters of the monastery. The monastery grounds were crowded with people. Everyone in the monastery felt that this was the last time that they could have a look at the blessed form of the Prophet, who had preached the Modern Gospel to many peoples of near and distant lands, whose greatness had been felt everywhere.

Towards the afternoon the body was brought downstairs to the porch in front of the courtyard. There on a cot it lay, wrapped in the robes symbolic of poverty of the Sannyâsin. The soles of his feet were painted over with Âltâ, a kind of crimson pigment, and impressions were taken of them on muslin, to be preserved as sacred mementos. Then the Arati service was performed, this being the last rite of worship to that form which had been the instrument for the revelation of the Highest Truth. Lights were waved, Mantras were recited, conch-shells were blown, bells were rung and incense was burned. At the end of the ceremony some bowed low, others fell prostrate on the ground in salutation, and those who were disciples, touched with their heads the feet of their Blessed Master's earthly form.

A procession was formed, and the cot upon which the body rested was slowly lifted. Again and again arose the thrilling shouts of *"Jaya Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jaya! Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajjiki Jaya,"* from the depths of the devotee's hearts.

The procession moved slowly through the courtyard across the spacious lawn, until it reached the Bilva tree which stands in the south-eastern corner of the grounds. There, slightly ahead and to the left, on the very spot where the Swami himself had desired his body to be cremated, the funeral pyre was built.

Finally the body was placed upon the funeral pyre by the monks and devotees. Reeds were lighted, and along with the monks scores of persons lighted the pyre until it was all ablaze.

In the deep dusk the flames died down, and in the souls of those who stood about, an intense calm prevailed. And when the flames had died out and the body had returned to its original elements, leaving only burning coals and smouldering embers behind, the monks poured Ganges water upon the pyre, and in the darkness their prayers went up to the Lord for guidance and protection. A great, great peace came,—and utmost resignation! All felt that the Lord knew best; and in their sorrow, they said in the depths of their hearts, "O Lord! Thy will be done!"

The next day, the monks gathered the sacred relics for themselves and the future generations. Today a temple stands upon the very spot. An altar has been built, and upon it a marble likeness of the Master has been placed. And here the monks are wont to pray and meditate in the silence of their inmost heart. The table of the altar stands on the very spot on which the body of the great Swami rested in the flames. Some of the relics are kept here, and a copper receptacle near the altar of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine contains the rest.

True, the monks and the lay disciples of the Order were still grief-stricken, but their faith in and resignation to their Lord with the resulting peace had taken away the sting of death. Deep beneath the veils of sorrow, all were aware that this was not the end. Emptiness dwelt in the monastery, but within the silence and illumination of their hearts, all were conscious of the fact that life in the soul, such as their Leader lived, could not have remained long shut up within the prison-walls of earthly existence, and that his constantly mounting realisation in its increasing intensity must have burned the body-consciousness and soared beyond the grasp of death in Nirvikalpa Samâdhi. And across the sad event of the passing of his presence from the world, the words he spoke in times long before his death, ring out with a triumphant meaning. "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God!" And that inspiration has come. And now that it has come it shall remain with the sons of men until the whole world attains the consummation of the Highest Truth. Aye, he scorned Mukti for himself until he could lead all beings in the universe to its portals. Vision and Realisation are imperishable. Being of the Truth they are eternal. And he is eternal,—he has Eternity in the palm of his hand, as it were,—who has found the Truth. And the notes of Freedom and Realisation are heard beyond the boundaries of life and death; and with the numerous devotees, the apostles and disciples of the Modern Gospel,—the prophets and the saints and seers of the Sanâtana Dharma,—the Voice of India is heard and shall resound down the distant centuries in those shouts of praise and triumph,—

Jaya Sri Guru Maharajjiki Jaya!
Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajjiki Jaya!
Jaya Sri Sanâtana Dharmaki Jaya!

And the benediction of the Most High rests now over the world anew. The flames of the Sanâtana Dharma have been re-kindled. Truly, gods have walked amongst the sons of men! Verily the Lord Himself, Truth Itself, was embodied as Ramakrishna-Vivekananda for the good of the world. The spirit of India herself had been made flesh; and they, the twin-souls who were born once more to awaken her, the great mother of religions, have passed from the flesh into the silence of the infinite, having fulfilled their mission and given the message. Verily, the divine Mother Herself, the destroyer of illusion and the giver of the waters of life, has walked upon the earth; and the sun of Brahman has bathed the world with its rays anew, scattering the clouds of darkness and ignorance, spreading the light of the celestial effulgence! And the ends of the world have met and the gospel of the age has been preached to the nations of the world. And the luminous spirits, who were the founder and the prophet of the new gospel, came because religion had declined and unrighteousness had prevailed. And they are to come again and again for the good of the world, for the establishment of righteousness, for the re-interpretation of the Sanâtana Dharma, and for the manifestation of the kingdom which is not of this world, the passport to which is the motto:

"Renounce! Renounce! Realise the Divine Nature! Arise! Awake! and stop not till the Goal is reached!"

HARI OM TAT SAT!

THE END

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